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# BELINDA THE BACKWARD

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# BELINDA THE BACKWARD

A Romance of Modern Idealism

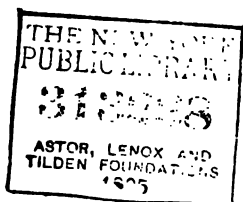
By  
SALOME HOCKING

*Author of "Some Old Cornish Folk" "Beginnings" etc.*

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## CHAPTER I

### FIRST STEPS

AMONG the little group gathered together in Dorset, which some were pleased to call a Colony and some a Settlement, there was hardly an individual whose special characteristic or distinguishing quality was not hit off more or less accurately by some other member of the group. Although it was not always so easy to do this in a single sentence, as had been done in my case, yet in nearly every instance there was a subtle something in the name given, or it might be only a prefix, or the shortening of the christian or surname, which conveyed to the observant listener some idea of the character of the person mentioned.

I think, however, that most of our "labels," as we called them, originated with one who was in his turn labelled the "Inspired Porter," because of his fondness for sticking on labels. He had once been an ardent State Socialist, and though he had come to see that any real reformation of character must come about by a man's own act rather than by Act of Parliament, he was still greatly dominated by his old beliefs and habits. He had been accustomed to speak of people as State Socialists, Fabians, I.L.P.'s or S.D.F.'s, and he could not now rest satisfied until he had classified and labelled each person.

After all, I suppose it was almost inevitable that a group who had more or less turned their backs on everything orthodox should have their characteristics

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writ large, so that he who ran might read. The very fact that they had thought themselves out of the ordinary placid acceptance of the "things that be," and desired to set up new rules for the conduct of life, or, as I sometimes thought, a return to old rules long since obscured, marked them out as a people to be cultivated or shunned, according to the views of those who met them.

My name, Belinda the Backward, was given to me the first time I met them, and stuck to me as such names generally do. Although I felt mortified that I, who considered myself a progressive in most matters pertaining to religious, political and social movements, should be thus named, yet I had a secret suspicion that this summing up of my character was not only apt and alliterative, but quite accurate; and here was the sting.

How vividly I recall my first visit to them, and the bewildering surprise I felt at the—to me—topsy-turvy views of life which they advocated. With the aims and ambitions of the ordinary individual I was only too familiar; to make all you could and carefully invest all you did not spend was such a familiar though unwritten law among us, and had grown so respectable through its being advocated by so many good people, that it had a religious flavour, and I don't think at that time I should have been much startled to have seen it added to the Ten Commandments and inserted in the Book of Common Prayer. But to meet a set of people who had no desire to make a fortune or even to "get on" in the world was in my estimation a unique experience; and although during the two years I lived in Dorset my life could not exactly be called a happy one, still, taking all things into consideration, I do not regret the many painful and exciting emotions I lived through.

But before I go on to speak of this phase of my life, I must relate the peculiar circumstances which led up to my joining the Strangeways Colony. In fact, those circumstances, over which I seemingly had no control, are the only explanation I have to offer for the strange fact that I, who was by nature, though not in theory,

extremely conservative, and as insular in my prejudices as any other Betsy Bull, and much given mentally to balancing myself on a fence, should yet be found among a group of people who were forever turning their backs on time-honoured customs and traditions, who believed in no laws save those prescribed by conscience and reason, and who were tied down by no conventionalities whatsoever and cared nothing at all for public opinion. To do this I must begin by introducing myself to the reader in the usual orthodox way, which will be only one more proof to my friends, should they need one, of how well I deserved the name they gave me.

My real name then is Belinda Annette Tremayne. My father, as my name denotes, was a Cornishman, but he had lived in London ever since I was a year old. My mother, who was a Londoner, had never taken kindly to country life and country ways during the three years she had lived in Cornwall, but had always pined secretly for her native city. I have heard her say that though when there she often abused the fogs and the smoke and the general grime, yet she was never away from it for any length of time without longing to be back. The sound of a popular London tune or the smoky smell of a garment taken from the bottom of a box, would recall all the old familiar sights and sounds and make her sad for hours. And so when an opening occurred and a berth for my father was secured in the great city, she had returned never to leave it again save for a few days' holiday, until she was called to that city not made with hands.

Although I had left Cornwall too young to have any recollections of it, I had heard so much about that county from my father that I always considered myself a Cornishwoman, much to the amusement of any Cornish people who heard me talk, for spite of all my care some turn of speech or expression would betray my Cockney upbringing.

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Of my life as a girl I need not say much. It was the life of hundreds of other middle-class girls in a London suburb. I was given what was considered a fair education, and then I came home to help my mother in the house, she being at all times rather delicate.

My father's salary, though only a small one, was sufficient for all our modest wants. And up to the age of twenty-one my life was singularly smooth and free from care. Then within a year of each other I lost both my parents. The two deaths coming so soon on one another nearly paralyzed me, and when I came back from my mother's funeral I cannot imagine in all London a lonelier girl than I. To be sure I was not quite friendless, for my mother's two brothers were with me, and each in his own way did his best to be kind.

When the undertaker had been paid and we were seated together in the dear familiar sitting-room, Uncle George, with what I suspect now was a sigh of relief, pulled off his black gloves and pushed his black-banded hat into a corner, and then allowing his face to relax into its old genial jolly lines instead of the lugubrious look he had worn ever since he entered the house, he turned to me and said briskly—

"Now, my dear, we must put aside the past and look at the future. What have you decided to do for a living?"

The question was so sudden, and I was so dazed by the events of the day, that I could not immediately answer, but I was spared the necessity of doing so, for Uncle Seth took the matter out of my hands by saying in his quick peremptory way, "I promised poor Milly that Belinda should be my care." Then turning his spectacled eyes on me he said in softer tones: "Your aunt has had the little store room at the back of the shop cleared out, and a bed put up, and she says if you would like to keep any of your furniture you can do so, then you will always have a room you can call your own."

Now, although I was very grateful for all this kindness and consideration, there was something very like dismay in my heart at having everything so summarily taken out of my hands. Far away down in the bottom of my mind there was the remembrance of a plan, or perhaps it would be more correct to call it an idea, which in happier days I had dreamt of some day putting into practice.

Ever since I left school I had been trying to write stories, one or two of which I had sold for trifling sums ; and so whenever any question of my future had arisen, instead of thinking of marriage as some girls do, I had decided that I would carve out my own future. In imagination I saw myself installed in a couple of rooms in some quarter of London where artists and authors and Bohemians generally might be found, something like the famous Latin Quarter in Paris of which I had read so much. How or in what way this romantic place was to be found, or whether any such place existed, I had never troubled to think. But it was always a pleasant prospect to turn to when Aunt Jane hinted to my mother, as she had lately done, that it was time I began to think of marriage and a home of my own.

But after my father died and my mother's health grew worse, and the possibility of the fulfilment of those romantic dreams drew ever nearer and nearer, I pushed them away from me in terror, feeling that in ever having harboured the thought of a life separate from my mother, I had in some way brought it about. Oh, how wildly I prayed that God would spare her to me, promising that every ambitious dream I had ever had should be trampled out of sight, and I would devote my whole life to her.

But my prayers, if they may be called such, received no attention, and as each day I saw her grow weaker and weaker, until the frail body became a burden too grievous to be borne, and the once bright intellect became obscured by pain, then I gave up



hope and ceased to pray. There was no personal God, I decided, who heard and answered prayer, and took notice of human suffering, as I had been taught to believe; only a great impersonal Deity who counted people by generations, and years by centuries. How little did I think then, when I so lightly let slip my faith in a personal God, deeming it a little thing in comparison with the loss of my mother, that I was throwing aside an armour which should leave me defenceless, exposed to every wind of doubt that blew my way.

And so when I came back from burying my mother, I had neither faith nor hope, and such apathy had seized me that I had no strength or desire to oppose Uncle Seth's plans for my future.

I have often wondered since if the results would have been better or worse, had I at the outset had the courage to take my career into my own hands. Whether, had I known from the first all the results which would follow my passive assent to Uncle Seth's plans, I should have unresistingly walked the road I did, I cannot even now make up my mind. As I look back I can see that the night when my mother died, and I with that stony calmness which is the outcome of despair watched the terrible battle which was fought between life and death, and instead of submitting with resignation to the Divine decree, repudiated with bitterness all belief in a personal prayer-answering God, that I then took the first step away from the peaceful paths of orthodoxy. And as I look back over the road I have travelled since that night, I see how one by one my hitherto unquestioned beliefs were subjected and exposed to the burning light of rational criticism, until one after another they shrivelled and died, dropping by the way like autumn leaves.

But all this is a profitless subject for me to dwell on now, for whether I ever had any choice in the matter or whether it was inevitable, one thing is

certain, it cannot be altered. And so, to return to my story, I went with Uncle Seth Dunn that night, and during the next week, with the exception of a few things which I kept for my own use, all the furniture was sold, and the dear old home was no more

I had shut the door and turned the key on my old life forever, and without knowing it taken the first step on the road which eventually led me into what was veritably an unknown country

## CHAPTER II

### CONNECTING LINKS

A GREATER contrast than my new life to the old could not well be imagined. Neither my father nor my mother were what could be called worldly wise ; to have enough food and raiment and to owe no man anything seemed to be the sum total of their modest requirements, while anything like ostentation or display was as foreign to their natures as it was to parade their religious beliefs. But at Uncle Seth Dunn's there were only two interests in life, money and religion.

I put money first, for on six days out of the seven the money god was all supreme. He absorbed all their thoughts and energies, and was the principal subject of conversation. True they cloaked his name and made him quite a useful and indispensable god by calling him business. In fact Uncle Seth Dunn (ably supported by his wife) was an embodiment of the spirit of the times. A keen, successful, not too scrupulous business man six days of the week, and an eminently respectable, religious man on the seventh. He never by any chance mixed his business with his religion (though he might have done so without much detriment I often thought), but he generally brought his business training to bear on his religious duties.

To do Uncle Seth justice, he crowded as much religion into the seventh day as it was possible for a man to do. We had grace before meals and Bible readings and prayer after. Uncle Seth went to chapel both morning and evening, and generally took a Bible class in the afternoon. Aunt Jane made a virtue of re-

maining at home in the evenings to let Kitty go. Although Aunt Jane was a liberal supporter of the church and honoured the Sabbath day by always coming down to breakfast dressed in her richest black silk and a generous display of jewellery, and wearing on her face what Kitty the maid-of-all-work described as her "pious look," yet I had always a secret suspicion that she did not take her religion seriously as Uncle Seth undoubtedly did. It was the correct thing to be seen in your pew at least once a Sunday, and Aunt Jane always took care to be correct. That duty being over she enjoyed herself in her own way; a thick novel and a plentiful supply of sweets being the usual form it took.

At first, absorbed as I was in my own grief and loneliness, I took but little notice of all this strict observance of the Sabbath, and fell in with Uncle Seth's wishes without any protest. But after a month or so when my lethargy began to wear off, and I woke up, so to speak, to my present surroundings, and began to listen to Uncle Seth's long wordy outpourings, I felt restive and terribly bored. About this time, too, Aunt Jane, who had been very kind to me, suggested that it was time I roused myself, and proposed that I should help in the shop. I think I have omitted to say that they were general drapers. Now, though I did not much like the idea of serving in a shop, still, having no legitimate reason to give for not doing so, I raised no objections.

Knowing nothing at all about business I was practically useless, but I did what I was told to do, sorted out buttons and cottons, sewed on fresh tickets, etc. This was monotonous work, but I varied it by watching the people who came into the shop and grew interested in noting the different ways in which they did their shopping. There was one class of shopper who always excited my admiration. This was the person who knew exactly what she wanted, and if that certain thing was not forthcoming would not be

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bullied, coaxed or argued into buying something else. There were others, however, who excited my contempt and disgust. They were the ladies (?) who came to see all there was to be seen without intending to buy, and these I noticed were always smartly dressed in the most up-to-date styles.

A third class excited my sympathy. These were the women who had no genius for shopping and only came because they were obliged to. They seldom knew quite what they wanted, but hoped to be shown something they would like, and when this was not the case they grew nervous and apologetic. I was surprised to find that this conduct instead of disarming the smartly dressed assistant only served to make her more determined to sell the rejected article. And in nine cases out of ten she succeeded. But sometimes the tenth woman had sufficient courage to remain firm in her refusal to buy something which she did not like. Then Uncle Seth, but more often Aunt Jane, would be called, and as I watched, my indignation grew almost to exploding point. The poor victim would be besieged on both sides by the assistant and Aunt Jane, who was a past master in coercing people to buy. First she would use flattery and then persuasion; these not answering, she would hint at the unreasonableness of the customer who after being shown such an assortment of blouses or skirts as the case might be still was not suited. She would be assured that "we" had the largest and most varied stock in the town, and that if she left she would be sure to come back again. Bullied and badgered on all sides, the poor victim generally yielded, and went away with a red spot burning on either cheek.

This badgering of customers into buying things that they did not like was to me perfectly shameful, and I ventured to say so to Aunt Jane. But she only laughed good-naturedly, and said that to sell a person a thing which she did not want to buy was one of the surest proofs of smart business capacity.

Once while I was there, one of the assistants allowed a customer to leave the shop without having effected a sale, and also without having called either Uncle Seth or Aunt Jane. Never shall I forget the rating that poor girl received, and then I understood why they were so terribly eager to *make* people buy.

When I saw how the ignorant were deceived, and the timid bullied, while the rich and often overbearing shopper was treated with almost sycophantic deference, I sickened of it all. And as I contrasted these week-day practices with the Sunday professions, I began very much to doubt Uncle Seth's sincerity. Was it possible for a man to so utterly eliminate Christianity from his business, and still believe himself to be a Christian? I asked myself. I had never cared very much for him, but now I ceased even to respect him and wished myself away.

Once more the remembrance of my old plans returned, and I began to wonder if I could not now put them into effect. But to my dismay when I tried to write I found that I had lost the light happy surface touch which was so necessary for the kind of magazine which would accept my contributions. I had ideas, but I could not work them out: my mind seemed incapable of any continuous effort, while my thoughts were not only chaotic, but terribly sombre. The truth of the matter was that, though the placid easily flowing life I had hitherto known had not been altogether beyond my poor powers of description, yet now I was like a swimmer who has got out of his depths. His bits of theories and rules for swimming seem utterly useless and only serve to exhaust him.

I, too, was out of my depths. The sheltered, peaceful, protected life I had known as a girl was behind me, cut off for ever by death. To most girls the gliding from girlhood into womanhood is so imperceptible, that they can seldom tell at what age they crossed the line, but for me two graves marked the spot.

It was no wonder then that I found myself unable to

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write, for I had no fixed beliefs, no foundation of faith for an anchorage. With the deaths of my parents, too, had come a terrible feeling of insecurity. This unseen inexorable power which had struck those nearest and dearest to me, and taken them out of my sight, made me feel the uncertainty of all human life and effort. It was utterly useless for me in such a frame of mind to ever attempt anything constructive, no matter how trivial it might be. My thoughts would run to nothing more than patches and shreds, so that my old ambition must be given up at any rate for a time. Perhaps when I grew older I might find some meaning in these terrible bereavements, some reason for my own existence which I could not now see. But in the meantime I would try to find out what other people had thought and written on these subjects.

And this was how I spent the next twelve months, serving in the shop during the day and reading all the books I could find, which promised information, in my spare time. It was a morbid, unhealthy life I led, for I made but few friends, and it was not to be wondered at that my health suffered. At last Aunt Jane grew alarmed at my loss of appetite and growing weakness, and insisted on calling in the family doctor. He was a wise genial old man, and when Aunt Jane left the room for a few minutes he by one or two judicious questions soon learnt how weary of my present life I had become, and how much I disliked serving in the shop.

When Aunt Jane returned, he told her that medicine was of but little use. What I wanted was a complete change of place, people, and surroundings. Had she any friends in the country where she could send me? In a family where were plenty of young people preferably.

I saw Aunt Jane start and hesitate, then she said slowly that she had a sister living in the country near the sea, but she was afraid her husband would object to my going there. Asked for a reason, Aunt Jane gave a

little forced laugh, and then with a burst of frankness said—

"Well, you know, although I am always considered an Englishwoman, yet I have a half-sister who is a Russian. My father was a Russian, so also was his first wife, and when she died and my father came to England, her people kept my half-sister with them. I know but very little of my father, for he died when I was a baby, but I believe he came of a good family in Russia. My mother was an Englishwoman, and I have never been out of England, consequently I knew but little of my half-sister until two years ago, when she wrote that she was staying near London, and would I come to see her. Her husband had been exiled for his religious beliefs, she told me, and they thought of settling in some quiet seaside or country place in England. He has some queer notions about giving up property and living by the work of his hands, I believe."

"*A la Tolstoy*, I suppose," said Doctor Foster with an interested nod. "And have they put their beliefs into practice? That's the part which always interests me in all these new ideas."

"I really can't tell you. I take very little interest in these matters. Vera asked me to visit her as soon as they were settled in Dorset, but Seth never cared for me to go, so I have never been."

"What a pity. Have they any family?"

"They have two little boys, but besides my sister's own family, I gather from her letters they have always a lot of friends and sympathizers who either live in the same house or near at hand. She told me they had bought a printing-press and are always busy translating and printing pamphlets to send to Russia."

"Well, it seems to me that our white-faced little friend here could not do better than pay your sister a visit if that is possible. In the country and not far from the sea, with plenty of company, nothing could be more fortunate. Her mind will be so full of new impressions that she will have no time to brood over



## CHAPTER III

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

It was early evening when I arrived. I had come up from the station in a cab alone, for no one had come to meet me. As I looked out into the gathering darkness, searching in vain for houses or lights, I began to feel nervous, and spite of all my professed admiration for the country, I understood for the first time some of the shrinking dread my mother had always felt for it. It was my first visit to the country in winter, and I had built much on the novelty of it, but I must confess that my heart sank when the cab stopped and I stepped out and waited for an answer to the driver's knock. The intense stillness and darkness seemed ominous, and I shivered as much with fear as cold. No answer being forthcoming and the cabman not liking to leave his horse, I ventured round the house to the back, and was at last rewarded by seeing a light streaming from an uncurtained window. Feeling around I found a door which opened into a dimly-lit washhouse or scullery. I knocked at the door opposite me, but there was such a babel of sounds within that it was not until I raised my umbrella and gave a sharp rap-rap that the noise ceased and some one called out "Come in."

I opened the door, and saw a very long table surrounded by people. A woman seated near the end rose and came towards me. There was a little look of Aunt Jane around the eyes, I thought, but that was all.

"Ah, you have come," she said with a very cordial smile. "We were going to send to the station, but the cart was broken."

There was some joke about the cart, I gathered, for there was a general laugh at her remark. Pointing to a chair near her own which some one had vacated she asked, "Are you hoongry; do you wish something to eat?"

I had thought I was both hungry and cold, but the strangeness of everything quelled any desire to eat, and I replied that I did not want anything, but I should be glad if some one would help me to bring in my box.

Some of them understood English evidently, for two tall dark-whiskered men wearing blouses immediately got up and went towards the door. I was following them when Mrs. Kovalevsky said—

"Why do you go? They can at-tend to your loogage."

Preferring however to pay the cabman myself, and pick up some papers I had left in the cab, I went out after them. When my modest luggage was deposited in the hall, we returned to the kitchen, and I sat down in the chair near my hostess. As I did so a big, broad, good-humoured looking woman with a white handkerchief tied around her head placed a plate of steaming potatoes in front of me and said something in Russian. I felt embarrassed as I looked at the liberally-filled plate, and to cover my confusion took up a fork and tried to eat a little, although as I said before my hunger had evaporated.

Under cover of the rapid conversation which was going on all around me, I ventured to look at some of the speakers. At first I thought they were all foreigners, and with the insular prejudice which comes of never having associated with any but my own nationality, I felt an unreasoning fear of them, and wondered if it would be possible for me to get back to London again that night. I laugh now as I think of my foolish fears, for never from one of them did I ever receive an unkind word or discourteous act. Impulsive, often unreasonable and thoughtless, and sometimes passionate and exacting, yet were they never deliberately unkind or

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ungenerous. Children of a younger civilization, they had not learned to control their feelings as those of older races. They were more emotional and less self-contained. This is how I think of them now, but at the time of which I write I knew as little of the Russian character as I did of the language, hence my desire to return to London that night.

I was startled the next moment by hearing a voice at my elbow say in very fair English, "Do you not wish some butter? You have nossing but potatooes."

I turned to look at the owner of the voice, for as yet I had felt too nervous to look at my immediate neighbours. As I caught sight of the young boyish face with the frank bright smile and a sort of rollicking humour in the amber brown eyes, I smiled back involuntarily. I forgot my fears, and as I helped myself to some butter, I began to speculate as to his nationality. The fair healthy face and thick yellow hair which stood up stiffly from his forehead were decidedly German, I thought. He was clean shaven, too, while most of the others wore beards. I felt glad that he was a German, for although I knew no Germans personally, yet I very much admired the German character.

Plucking up my courage I ventured to ask, "Are there no English people here at all?"

I think somehow he understood the unspoken thought behind the words, for with a little laugh he said merrily, "Will you run away if dere are not? But why should you be afraid, it is de English who are de robbers of de world."

I laughed too as I answered, "How can you say that when we *buy* so many things that are *made in Germany*?"

"Ah, de Shermans are a very great people. Do you speak Sherman?"

I had to reply regretfully that I could speak no language but my own.

"Dat is no matter. I will teach you Russian. It is vary easy. Now, say ——"

The long five-barrelled word which he reeled off so glibly seemed utterly impossible to my slow English tongue, and when he persisted in my trying, my stuttering efforts were so ludicrous that they called forth a roar of laughter. Asking the meaning of the word, I was told it meant self-perfection, or rather, as we should put it I suppose, a perfected self. I told him I never expected to reach such a stage of progress, so I didn't think I would try to pronounce that word again.

A little later, remembering my question, he said, "You will meet a lot of English pipples to-morrow. Dere are many living near. De English are, so, what you say? Conserv-a-tive, dey like to have every one a house. If dey are only two pipples dey must have a leetle house all to demselves."

Just then the door opened, and a tall bearded imposing looking man entered. Seeing me he bowed in a very stately manner, but shook hands cordially enough, and asked after Aunt Jane, and hoped I had had a pleasant journey. This was Mr. Kovalevsky, I guessed. He spoke English fluently and with a wonderfully good accent.

Soon after some discussion arose about Socialism, I think; for I caught the word several times, and then I noticed that as Mr. Kovalevsky talked the young German's face lost all its drollery and grew very grave, even angry, I thought, and then he began to speak rapidly, but the others did not stop, and there were at least four talking at the same time. Mrs. Kovalevsky also joined in later on, and soon it seemed to me that I, who understood not a word, was the only listener.

In the middle of the discussion tea was brought on, of which I was very glad, and a little later one of the serving women came to me with a candle in her hand and said kindly, "You vary tired, perhaps you like baad?"

Bidding Mrs. Kovalevsky good-night I followed the woman gladly, for I was very weary. After passing through some long passages and up a wide staircase she

showed me into a fair-sized bedroom. Then placing the candle on a table she said something in Russian and left me. I looked around the room almost with wonder. Never before had I seen a bedroom so severely plain. A deal table in front of the window, a couple of chairs of the same wood, an enamelled jug and basin on a little corner stand, a narrow bedstead by the side of the wall, and that, save my own luggage, was all the room contained. Evidently personal vanity was not encouraged here, for there was no mirror. Well, I must make my hand-glass do, I decided. At any rate the room was beautifully clean and fresh, and a little Spartanism would do me good.

I woke the next morning with a pleasant sensation of everything being new. Instead of the constant rattle of the early traffic to which I had been accustomed all my life, no sound broke the stillness save the twittering of birds. I forgot the lassitude which had been my companion for months, and dressed quickly, for I wanted to be out and about.

When I found my way down to the kitchen, which I inferred was the general dining-room, I saw only the woman who had shown me to my room the night before. She smiled in a friendly way, and asked me in her broken English would I like an egg? I said yes, but I would wait for the others. She murmured something which sounded like "Naat, naat," and proceeded to pour me out a cup of tea and pushed the bread and butter towards me.

Feeling that I could not make her understand I seated myself and commenced breakfast. Soon after two of the men I had seen the night before came and helped themselves to tea and bread. Evidently there was no fixed time for breakfast, for they kept dropping in one by one.

When I had finished I went upstairs to my room, and after making the bed, put on my hat and coat and went out. There were extensive grounds around the house, and a very large kitchen garden in a good state of culti-



vation. The house stood quite alone surrounded by fields, but in the distance I saw that there were several houses dotted here and there. The scenery was pleasing rather than grand, I thought, for although the house stood on a slight eminence, yet the country for some distance around looked very flat. Beyond that however there were two or three fairly high hills, and several clumps of tall pines which made a pleasing variety.

As I looked I saw a train winding round a curve of the valley, and as I watched it I discerned the station where I must have got out last night. The place was not nearly so uninhabited as I had thought, for I was surprised to see at the right of the station from where I stood what looked like a small town. I caught a glimpse too of a piece of water, and then I remembered that the sea was near here. I wondered if I could find my way to it. I looked at my watch; it was a only little after nine: I had all the morning before me. I would go back and see if Mrs. Kovalevsky was out of her room, and if not I would start off.

In the house I encountered my German friend, as I thought him, but he soon undeceived me. Although he bore a German name, he was neither German nor Russian, though he spoke both languages. He had come from one of the Baltic provinces, he told me, and they had a language of their own. But when the Russian Government annexed his country, they had made Russian the official language. He was very friendly, and told me, when I asked him, that Mrs. Kovalevsky was not yet risen, and that he didn't think Mr. Kovalevsky would be ready for me until eleven. This being the case I decided to go exploring.

About half an hour's walking brought me to the sea. The sound of the surf on the pebbly beach had been an unerring guide. Seadown was as yet an undeveloped watering place, with perhaps a couple of dozen large houses, a few smaller ones, a church, and a row of shops. There was a long stretch of downs on the sea-front, with the inevitable gate which told you that the ground

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was open to the public by kind permission of the self-constituted owner.

I walked along the grassy headland, stopping every now and then to look down at the sea as it came rolling in. It was a still gray morning, and a kind of brooding calm hung over the whole place. Hitherto I had seen the sea only in summer time, and at such places as Margate and Ramsgate, where the beaches are covered with human ants, and one is never alone. I looked around now—not a soul was in sight—I had the whole sea front to myself.

At first I felt elated. A spirit of possession entered me. All this expanse of sea and downs was mine as long as I liked to stay. I walked until I was tired, and then sat down to watch that great restless heaving mass of waters with its never ceasing effort. I saw the breakers forming into line half a mile out, gathering force and strength all the way until they broke with a crash on the beach below. In the summer when the skies are blue and the sun shines down on the water, the sea always seems young and gay to me. There is a frolicsome playfulness about the waves as they chase each other on to the sand, and then rush back again as if for the mere fun of constant motion. But now under this gray January sky, the sea seemed old and relentless. It no longer came in for the mere pleasure of caressing the warm sand with its cooling touch, for as it returned I could hear by the gurgle and suck that it was carrying the sand and pebbles back with it, leaving great hollows in the shelving beach. The spirit of elation died out of me, I no longer felt the delight of possession; on the contrary, I wanted to leave it all and get back to my own kind. The sea was too sad and unresting, I thought. And there seemed to me a sound of bereavement in that constant monotone which underlay all the other sounds. I became conscious too that I was very tired, and wished I had not walked so far.

As I returned through the village, I wondered where

all the people were. The houses did not look empty, but I saw no sign of a human being. Perhaps the inhabitants were all invalids, and only came out when the sun was shining. Spite of my weariness I noticed how very pretty and peaceful the place looked. The firs, the flowering and evergreen shrubs gave an appearance of spring even in winter, and when those pieces of wooded copse came into leaf the place would doubtless look very beautiful. And yet as I walked on I comforted myself with the thought that to-day my German friend had told me I should meet a lot of English people.



## CHAPTER IV

### TRYING TO UNDERSTAND

As I was going rather wearily upstairs to my room to take off my hat and jacket I met Mr. Kovalevsky coming out of a room with some papers in his hand. He bowed in his stately way and asked after my health, and then continued pleasantly—

"I understand you have been out on a little exploring tour, and how do you like this place?"

"I think it is extremely pretty, but rather lonely. I haven't seen a single person anywhere about."

"And I suppose you think that is a great drawback, while we think it one of the chief advantages of this place. But you English people are never happy unless you are near enough to your neighbours to look in at each other's windows."

I laughed, not knowing what reply to make to this bantering speech, but it was not necessary, for immediately a grave look replaced the smile on his face, and in a polite but business-like tone he intimated that if I was not too tired, he would be glad if I would come to his room to write some letters for him. A few minutes later I followed him into the room I had seen him enter, on the door of which was affixed a ticket with some Russian characters written on it. The young German, as I still called him to myself, Karl Brietsen, was there, but he only noticed me by a stiff little nod, and went on talking rapidly to Mr. Kovalevsky. When he had left the room Mr. Kovalevsky turned to me, and taking up a lot of letters spread them out on a table in front of one of the windows where I presumed I should have to work, and then began

to explain to me what he wanted to have written. His instructions were so complicated and voluminous that my head fairly whirled. He went on and on never stopping except to take breath, and by the time the last letter was laid down I felt utterly bewildered. Before I could say a word he continued—

“And now that is all. I feel sure you will have no difficulty in replying. And, ah, will you get them ready for the evening post as some of them are very urgent, and it is most important that they should be sent off to-night. I will myself look over them before they are sent off. And now I will leave you as I have an important engagement.”

And with a very pleasant smile he left me.

In a half-dazed way I turned the letters over. My memory seemed to have become a blank, for of all the instructions which had been given me, not one could I remember. What was I to do? A feeling of despair crept over me, for never before had I felt so helpless. I had had an idea that secretarial duties would prove quite easy, and yet here at the first piece of work that was asked of me I found myself quite useless. Then determining that I would not give up at the first difficulty that stood in my way, the thought came to me that all I needed to do was to read through each letter carefully and they would most likely suggest to my memory Mr. Kovalevsky's replies.

I took up the first; it was four pages long, and seemed to be an argument about the wrong use of some scientific phrase in one of their Russian publications. Beyond the fact that Mr. Kovalevsky had dictated a very long reply, I knew nothing of it. I took up the next, a lady's this time. She was in doubt as to whether Count Tolstoy believed in an after life, giving quotations from one of his books which implied that he did, and from another which showed that he evidently did not. Would Mr. Kovalevsky clear up this seeming contradiction, and also give her his own private opinion on the matter.

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My brain seemed to clear a little as I read this letter. I forgot my difficulties in the interest I felt in the point this woman had raised, and I too was anxious for a reply. And what had been Mr. Kovalevsky's reply to this, I asked myself. I leant my head on my hands and tried hard to recall what he had said. There was something about her having made the mistake of not reading the books in the order in which they had been written, that though each book was complete in itself, yet there were some which dealt more exclusively and exhaustively with some particular subject, and in this case "My Religion" (or was it "My Confession?") should have been read first.

Ah! which was it? Puzzle over it as much as I would I could not remember, and once more a feeling of despair laid hold of me. All these letters to be ready for the evening post and I had not done a single one. Just then came a tap at the door, and a second later Karl Brietsen entered. Seeing me alone, his grave, preoccupied manner suddenly left him, and with the brilliant smile which had made him seem like a friend from the first, he said—

"What is de matter? Why do you look so meeserable?"

"I am very miserable," I said looking down at the letters to hide the moisture which had risen to my eyes at the first sound of his sympathetic voice.

"But what is wrong? You must tell me and perhaps I can help you, though I am very beesy."

"Oh, all these letters must be answered by evening, and I can't remember anything Mr. Kovalevsky told me to say. He spoke so *very, very* fast that I quite forgot to make any notes."

He looked amused. "Ah, I tink you are not accustomed to de Russian way of doing tings yet. Do not be sad, wait a leetle while and it will be all right. As for doing all dese letters for dis evening you must not trouble. Do what you can and leave de rest."

"Oh, but he said they were 'most important,'" I began, doubtfully.

His eyes twinkled, and taking up one of the letters he read out the date. "Dis one is tree mont's auld and it is not answered yet."

I caught at his meaning, and the load seemed to lift. "Then what would you advise me to do?" I asked.

"Read dem all trough and put aside dose dat you cannot remember, and answer de ones you understand in your own way. And now let me give you a leetle bit of advice. If you are working very hard and Mr. Kovalevsky brings you a lot more work, tell him to put it on ze table and you will do it when you have time. And if he says he wants it at once say you will thry, but do not promise. It is ze only way if you mean to stay here."

"But do you mean that it is not really important? Then why should he use such expressions? Is he afraid I shall be lazy?" I asked rather indignantly.

"Oh no, not at all. You do not understand. You see it is vary important at ze time, but so are a lot of ozzer tings, and ze last ting will be de most important of all."

I looked at him wonderingly. Should I ever understand! He burst into a merry laugh.

"Oh, you English pipples! You are so very, how do you say? eg—eg—"

"Exact," I suggested.

"Yes, dat is de word, eggzact. You say I vill do one ting next week, and you mean *next* week, and it is done. We alzo say next week and we mean it, if nossing happens, but if it is too deeficull, why ze week after or maybe next month will do."

"Then if I cannot get all these letters done to day—and I'm sure I can't—I must do them to-morrow, or perhaps next week."

"Ah, now you laugh; dat is good. Now I muz go."

He had not helped me out of my difficulties, it is true, and yet I felt their load lightened, and once more I turned to the mass of letters before me. What he had mentioned about the date gave me an idea. I sorted

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them all out, deciding to reply to those of recent date first, as they might be important, and then work back. Some of them I found were quite simple, and the reply was obvious. In those I was doubtful of I could leave gaps, which I could easily fill in when Mr. Kovalevsky had read them.

By the time the dinner bell rang I had sorted them all out, and so was able to eat my dinner with some degree of appetite. The constant buzz of a strange language was, however, rather disconcerting, and I began to long for the sound of an English voice. I tried to say something to Mrs. Kovalevsky, but she seemed much more interested in the conversation going on at the other side of the table, so I decided to remain silent. Once or twice I caught some English words from the other end of the table. They seemed to come from a broad-shouldered, long-haired man, with blue eyes, and a very brilliant colour. He was not English I knew from his accent, which was very foreign. The serving woman to whom he seemed to address his remarks, said little but "da, da" (yes, yes) in reply.

As soon as dinner was over I went back to the study, or cabinet, as I found they called it. I worked on all the afternoon, but saw nothing of Mr. Kovalevsky until tea-time, and then he seemed so pre-occupied that I had not the courage to address him. The constant sound of a language I did not understand oppressed me, and when some one made a move from the table I was only too glad to escape.

A little later Mr. Kovalevsky came to his study, and looking at the little pile of letters which I had addressed and stamped ready for his approval, he said pleasantly—

"Ah, I see you are very neat and methodical. I am very glad. But perhaps now you would like a little change of work. Here is a little article of mine which I should like you to read, and correct any mistakes I have made, if it will not be too much trouble."

I said I should be delighted to read it, but his English

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was so good, I felt sure there would be no mistakes for me to correct.

"Ah, but I speak English much better than I write it. Perhaps you will take it to your own room, as I may want to work here myself this evening. And while I think of it, perhaps it will be better for you always to work in your own room, as I have very often to see people here."

He was leaving the room when I asked—

"And these letters, will you go through them now, then they can be posted?"

He took out his watch. "Ah, yes, I think there will be time, I will read them at once."

He sat down and read them through rapidly, supplied the blanks, and then rising said graciously—

"It is a great relief to have my English letters taken off my hands, they take up so much time. I see you write very nice English. I am very glad. I think my wife told me that you used to do a little literary work. Some day you must show me your stories, I am sure they will be very interesting. Ah, by the way, if you have the time will you make a fresh copy of my article, as your writing is so much clearer than mine?"

I said I would do so with pleasure: how soon would he want it back?

"As soon as you can get it done, as I would like to send one copy away in the morning to get it typed. And now I must go."

"Is he always in a hurry like this?" I wondered, as I collected some paper and writing materials to take back to my room. The unfinished letters I decided to leave until morning as he seemed to have forgotten them. Then, if I could summon up the courage, I should have to ask for fresh instructions. I wished I wasn't so nervous when in his presence, but perhaps I should get over that in time.

I was very glad to have the opportunity of reading this article, it would perhaps help me to understand him better, for as yet I seemed to know nothing at all

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about him. That he was a different type of man from any I had ever met before, I was very certain, but beyond the fact that Mr. Kovalevsky was very big and imposing looking, and had very suave, courtly manners, I had been able to form no opinion of him whatever. For, strangely enough, in my two interviews with him, my critical faculties seemed to have left me entirely. I was conscious only of a desire to do as he asked me, and it was only after he had left the room that I realized how far below my desire to please was my ability to execute. As I sat down in my room and looked at the bundle of manuscript I held in my hand and thought of my promise to get it copied by morning, my heart sank. Then I remembered Karl Brietsen's advice to do as much as I could and leave the rest, and once more my heart was lightened, and I turned to the manuscript with eagerness.

Now I should be able to get behind Michael Kovalevsky's overpowering personality, read his thoughts, and learn what kind of a man he was, while my own faculties were alert and under my own control.

## CHAPTER V

### NEW EXPERIENCES

My first sensation was one of disappointment. I had expected something more brilliant from the rapidity and ease of his spoken words. But instead his sentences seemed heavy and laboured, and altogether too long. Then, again, he appeared to have chosen the longest words in our language rather than the most effective, thus depriving his sentences of that terse crispness which is so desirable. By the time I had come to the end of the third page, however, I had forgotten to criticize the form in the astonishment I felt at the matter.

No revolutionist could preach more revolutionary doctrine than was written here, I thought. Only the revolution which Michael Kovalevsky advocated was a bloodless one. There was no need of banners or crowds to bring it about, no oversetting of one government to put another in its place, and yet if each man put into practice this doctrine, not merely theoretically, but actually, without thought of consequences, governments would fall to the ground as naturally as dead leaves fall off a tree, for the simple reason that no man would be found willing to govern.

The burden of his remarks seemed to be man's treatment of his brother man, as it was, and as it should be. Under the first head he put forward the startling theory, that we (all who were not producers) were all thieves and robbers, inasmuch as we were taking as much as we



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could from the man at the bottom, the working man, and giving nothing in return. Shrink from the idea as we might, cover it up with charities and doles, and dull essays on political economy, yet stripped of all falsehoods and sophistries, we were all thieves, for how few of us ever *served* the working man? We took his services, oh, quite freely and as a matter of course, sometimes even imagining ourselves benefactors in providing so much work for him, and we gave him in return, what? A little of the money he and his kind had risked their lives to dig out of the ground for us.

Under the second head, he began by saying that if all the teaching of the best writers of all ages and all languages, could be gathered together and melted into a crucible, and the essence be caught and condensed into one word which could be understood and applied universally, for the uplifting and ennobling of the human race, that one word would be —. No, not God, for there were many gods, for every nation and almost every individual had a different god, and with his name on their lips, they shot and hung and burned and tortured their fellow man, and then asked his blessing on their crimes. No, the word would not be God, for there was no universal God, but it would be, love. That word put into action could be understood by all races, without the need of dogmas or creeds or elaborate theologies to explain it. Let a man once love his fellow man, and he would cease to be his enemy.

The address closed by an appeal to all those who heard or read his words to cease oppressing those beneath them, to not only think kindly, but act with love under all circumstances and towards all people as one would act towards one's own well loved mother or brother or child.

"He must not only be a great, but a good man," I said to myself as I finished reading the MS., and mentally I held out my hand to Mr. Kovalevsky for his fearless and outspoken words.

Animated by the desire to do something on my part, though only in the smallest way, to help spread the ideal which was upheld in the article, I forgot all fatigue, and copied page after page, not even hearing the supper bell, and it was only when there came a knock at the door that I remembered I had been up here since five o'clock.

It was one of Mr. Kovalevsky's little boys, Dmitri, who told me they were all having supper. I hurriedly washed my burning face and smoothed my hair, then went downstairs.

As I took a seat near Mrs. Kovalevsky, she looked at me critically and said—

"What have you been doing that you are so late? You look very warm."

I told her I had been copying her husband's article, and had not heard the supper bell.

"That is very complimentary to me," remarked Mr. Kovalevsky, smilingly. "I am afraid no one else will go without their supper to listen to it."

I put in some kind of a disclaimer, but as usual I found myself unable to say much in his presence. When I had finished supper I was returning to my room to go on with the copying, though by this time I was feeling woefully tired, but Mrs. Kovalevsky very cordially pressed me to stay for the tea, which I found afterwards was the nightly custom. I hesitated, saying that there was a good deal more to be done. She spoke rapidly to her husband in Russian, who replied in the same language, then turning to me he said graciously—

"My wife thinks you look very tired, and says you must not work any more to-night. I quite agree with her, for I see you are one of the conscientious ones and must not be allowed to overwork yourself. There will be plenty of time to finish what you are doing to-morrow."

I had no wish to remind him that he wanted to have it ready for typing in the morning, for now that I was

no longer upheld by excitement, I felt almost hysterical with fatigue.

I fell asleep almost as soon as my head was on the pillow that night, but it was not a restful sleep. I was oppressed by some load of care which seemed to be weighing me down. Strange figures hovered round me beckoning me to some height which, strive as I would, I could not reach. Then there was the sharp ringing of bells, and whispering voices all round me, and when I woke up in a bath of perspiration it was to find that part of my dream was reality. I could hear footsteps on the landing, and once or twice I heard voices.

"What can be the matter? Surely it is not time to get up yet?" I said to myself, as I sat up in bed listening. Feeling around me for the matches, I struck one and looked at my watch. It was only three o'clock. Then something must be the matter. A fire! or somebody ill!

Jumping out of bed I hurriedly pulled on my stockings and threw on my dressing-gown, and taking my candle, which I had already lit, went out on the landing. I could still hear a subdued murmur of voices, but I could see no one. At last, looking over the bannisters, I saw some one coming up the stairs, but in the dim light I could not tell whether it was a man or woman. As the figure drew nearer I saw it was the servant to whom I had not yet spoken. She was wearing a thick wadded coat, which made her look not unlike a moving feather bed. All I could learn from her was that "Meesus Kovalevsky was vary eel." When I asked what was the matter she shook her head and said, "I not oonderstand." I tried by repeating her own words about her mistress, and then by holding my head like one in pain, to show her what I wanted to know.

With a woman's quick wit she understood, and placing her hand on her heart, shut her eyes and gasped. Then, opening them again with an intelligent nod, she hurriedly left me. Not knowing what to do I went back to my room, but not to bed, and when some time later

I heard footsteps passing my door, I again went out. It was the other serving woman, Katrina. She told me Mrs. Kovalevsky was a "leetle better." Feeling very much relieved I returned to bed. It was long before I again fell asleep, but when I did, I slept so heavily that when I woke I found the winter sunshine streaming into the room. I looked at my watch and found it was nine o'clock. I was glad to see the sun lighting up the room, for in myself I felt heavy and depressed.

There was very little conversation indulged in at the breakfast-table by any one, for at the slightest noise Katrina held up a warning hand. I asked after Mrs. Kovalevsky, and was told she was sleeping. Feeling the need of fresh air before starting to work I went out into the garden. There were three men turning up the soil; one of them was the long-haired man I had noticed the day before. He looked up at me as I was passing in a way that made me think he would like to speak, so I stopped and said "Good morning," and then with an impulse to be friendly, added, "How are you?"

"Very vell. How's yerself?" was his particularly free and easy reply.

I felt a little taken aback, but answered that I was well.

"Vell, and vat do you tink of dis place?" he asked in the same unconventional manner.

"Oh, I think it is very pretty, but isn't it terribly dull? Though country places always are dull in winter, I suppose?"

"Vat for do you call dis country? Vy, it is nearly town!"

"It doesn't seem so to me after London."

He screwed up his lips and emitted a queer little whistle, and then said contemptuously—

"I do not like your London."

"Why not?"

"It is dreadful: everybody in ve streets looking as if vey 'ave only von day to live, and vey must vork every meenit of dat day. Vat for must I be so mad?"

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"Certainly there is not much reason in it," I assented. "But don't you work in your country?"

"In Holland? By gosh, yes, ve vork very hard and for leetle money too, very leetle. But it is not such a blasted rush."

"Who taught you to speak English?" I asked hastily.

"Nobody. I pick it up by myself," he answered proudly.

I felt rather glad of that. "And have you also learnt Russian?"

"No, by gosh, life is too short. And vat for should I learn? Everybody speak English all over ve vorld, so I larn English. Ven I come I not know von vord, but I meet von Dutchman who speak English much better van I can now. By George, he could speak, and he read my letter to von Englishman, and he write for me ve stations I must go. So I come. Good day!"

I went back to my room feeling rather amused at my conversation with the breezy, cheery Dutchman, and more cheerful too. At any rate *I* was in my own country, even though I was in a house full of foreigners.

Settling to my work, I finished copying the manuscript, and took it down to Mr. Kovalevsky's study, hoping to be able to clear up my difficulties with the other letters; but he was not there. Going downstairs to the kitchen, I learnt from Katrina that he had been up all night, and was now sleeping, and must not be disturbed. I asked if I could help her, and with a "Sank you" she went away, and returned with a large basket of potatoes, a bowl, and a knife. I set to work, glad of the change of occupation. She was a friendly soul, and though she did not know much English, yet by ekeing out our conversation with a little dumb-show, we managed to extract some information from each other.

By dinner-time the atmosphere of the house had changed, and I guessed that Mrs. Kovalevsky was better. I saw nothing of the family, however, so pre-

sumed they were having their dinner upstairs. It was Saturday, and therefore a half-holiday. The sun was shining brightly, and everybody seemed in gay good humour. My spirits rose too, and when Karl Brietsen asked me if I would join them in a little excursion, I assented eagerly.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"To de Colony. Dere is one English gentleman who lives near, and we are all going to his house to tea, and perhaps stay to de meeting. Have you a bicycle?"

I said I was sorry, but I had left mine in London.

"Never mind, we will borrow one. But you must have yours sent down; it is so much easier to get about if you have a bicycle. You must write at once and have your bicycle here, den you can always go wid us."

His manner was so insistent, and at the same time so cordial, and his gaiety was so infectious, that without thinking whether my stay at Seadown would be long enough to justify the expense, I promised to write at once, and post it on my way. It may be well to state here that I did this, and had my bicycle sent on the following week.

The Colony was about five miles from Seadown, and right in the country. There was one Englishman in our party, and from him I learnt a few particulars about some of the members of the Colony. As we rode up to the house, a large strongly built farmhouse, which I was told had been rented for a year by Mr. Wallace Glacier, we found a lot of bicycles leaning against the walls, so I gathered we should be a large party. The house seemed to be thrown open to all comers, for we walked in without knocking. Following after the Seadown House party, we entered a large plainly furnished room on the left, where were gathered several people of both sexes, some seated, some standing in small groups, nearly all talking. Spying an empty chair near one of the windows, I crossed over and sat down. I felt rather embarrassed, as nobody came to speak to me, but gathered courage when I

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heard Karl Brietsen speaking English to some one near me. Lifting my eyes, I scanned the faces that were turned in my direction with eager curiosity.

In a crowd not one of the English people would be singled out for anything peculiar, but here in a room I fancied I saw something in each face which was worthy of study. I noticed that, with one or two exceptions, they were all plainly, even shabbily attired, and I wondered if they, like Mr. Kovalevsky, disbelieved in the holding of private property, and denounced all wealth as immoral while there were people in the world who were dying of hunger.

I tried to pick out one or two from the description given me. That short, clean-shaven man, with a face that would make up well for an actor or a clown, who was talking to Karl Brietsen, was the "Inspired Porter" I felt certain. I liked his face, for there was not only kindness, but a genuine sense of humour in his twinkling eyes. The other man near him, also dark and clean-shaven, but taller, with a tremulous, sensitive mouth, must be the man who founded the Colony, for they were calling him "the boss." "And if it came to a tussle, he would insist on being that too," I thought as I studied the lines of his face, for I had often heard my father remark that emotion and passion are twin sisters.

There was something aggressive as well as emotional about this man, and one could easily imagine him being entirely dominated by his feelings—at one time being caught up on the wings of enthusiasm and lifted to almost dizzy heights, or, on the other hand, falling into fits of depression which would drag him down to unplumbed depths.

"Are you studying the Colony Cranks?" asked someone who had crossed the room without my noticing.

## CHAPTER VI

### STUDYING THE CRANKS

I LOOKED up and saw a dark-haired, dark-eyed, laughing-faced young woman of medium height standing near me. Her face was so jolly and mirth-provoking that I laughed back as I answered—

“I don’t know what you call them, but they are wonderfully interesting. I wish you would tell me who they all are ?”

“That’s rather a large order, but pick out the ones you would like to know, and I will introduce you.”

“But that isn’t quite what I want,” I replied frankly. “I am afraid I must be a bit of a coward, for I always like to look at a crowd from a safe distance.”

She nodded understandingly. “Ah, you are one of those people who like to sit on a fence and shout with the biggest crowd.”

There was a slight inflexion of sarcasm in her tones, I thought, but I was not sure. “You meet with a lot of people like me, I expect ?”

“Rath-er. It is wonderful how careful the majority of people are not to go further on the road of progress than they can comfortably walk back again. Do you see that woman over there by the door ?”

“Do you mean that white-faced woman with the dark eyes, and the stylish hat with roses underneath ?” (She was one of the exceptions I had noticed.)

“Yes ; we call her Winnie the Wobbler, for she is everything by turns. Spiritualist, theosophist, social



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reformer, and general believer in every other kind of up-to-dateism you can mention. She goes all the way in theory, but just look at the fetching way in which she is got up! She doesn't belong to us, thank goodness, but she professes to be greatly in sympathy with the Colony. When she was told about us, I understand she remarked, 'How sweet! Couldn't I do something to help the dear creatures? I am an excellent French cook!' Just imagine. Last year we lived for weeks on small potatoes, which were partly green, and parsnips."

"Perhaps French cookery would have made your green potatoes into turtle soup," I suggested. "But now, who is that fair-faced young giant with the yellow tousled hair, and beautiful blue eyes like sapphires? He is standing by the fireplace with his arms folded."

She laughed even while she cast an affectionate look at him, I thought. "That is Frank Mordaunt, our hut-and-nut man."

"How do you mean? Does he live in a hut and eat nuts?"

"Something of that. He holds the theory that all food is spoilt by cooking, and thinks it a pity that fire was ever invented. He believes that fruit and nuts are the proper diet of man, and that as soon as the body grows accustomed to this diet it will become so strong and healthy that there is really no reason why it should ever die."

"He looks a thorough dreamer, but I like his face very much."

"Yes; everybody is fond of Mordaunt. He is so good-tempered and uncomplaining. He provides us with many a laugh too, for he will walk off two miles to post some letters, and never discover until he gets to the post-office that he has left them at home on the table."

"And who is that gentleman who has just come into the room?"

"Oh, that is our host for to-day, Mr. Wallace Glacier."

"And haven't you any descriptive name for him?" I asked, after a few minutes' study of his face. The clear-cut aristocratic face of almost transparent whiteness, with the steel-blue eyes and black beard and moustache, was so striking, almost startling, that I felt sure, even though he was also a crank, he must be a crank of the first grade.

"No; I really don't think anybody has given him a name. He is always Wallace Glacier in full, nothing more nor less. And now tell me what your name is, and why you have come down here? I suppose you are staying at Seadown House, as you came with that party?"

She looked at me as she spoke so frankly and winningly, that I soon found myself telling her freely all about my past life. I must have disclosed to her, too, something of my uncertain frame of mind, for after I had replied to several questions she nodded her head waggishly at me and said, "I know what we shall call you—Belinda the Backward."

"But why?" I asked.

"Because you do not know where you stand. You are progressive in thought, but conservative in action. You have begun to be critical and to question your old beliefs, but you haven't the courage to break away from them entirely. You are balancing yourself on a fence without knowing on which side to come down. Never mind, you will hammer out a working belief for yourself later on, so don't despair. There! they are all going to tea. Come along."

I followed her into a very large kitchen, with a table which reached almost from one end of the room to the other. After as many were seated at the table as could find room, the others constituted themselves waiters, and when not on duty took their tea standing. There were stacks of thick slices of bread, large pieces of cheese and butter, very plain-looking home-made cakes, fruit, and nuts.

"Mr. Wallace Glacier must be very much in sym-

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for how little I knew after all of the subjects which seemed everyday topics to these people !

Just then, everybody having finished tea, there was a general move. Several of the men took off their jackets and began to prepare to wash-up. I followed after the party who returned to the sitting-room.

"Going to sit on the fence with me and shout with the biggest crowd ?" I whispered to Jessie Newman, a trifle maliciously, as we walked along the passage.

She laughed good-humouredly. "I shall set Karl Brietsen on to you if you don't behave yourself," she whispered back.

"Why, is he a terror to all idlers ?" I asked.

"No, only to women ; he professes to despise them all."

This was news to me, and when a little later on he came to where we were sitting I said, half laughing, half in earnest, "I didn't know you despised women. What have we done to call forth your displeasure ?"

"But I have never said dat I despise women. I always pity dem," he replied, looking at me with his mirth-provoking smile.

"Oh, come, that's too sweet. You know you've never got a good word to say of them. Why, it was only last week that I heard you say that women were all impossible."

"Yes ; and I will say so again. Aren't dey always crying out for equal rights wid de men ? And yet dey never prove demselves wort'y of dem. What for do dey separate demselves from de men if dey are equals ? Why make for demselves leetle,—how do you say ?—organizations ? Why do dey not join in wid dere husbands and broters and help on de great cause ?"

"What cause ?" I asked.

"Fancy asking that !" interjected Jessie Newman. "Why, there is only one cause in the world for Karl Brietsen, and that is revolutionary socialism."

I looked at him in surprise, for as yet I knew nothing of his views. "Then are you in favour of overthrowing

all monarchical governments and setting up republics in their places ? ” I asked curiously.

“ I do not know ; dat is a question dat can be answered later. Just now, all we who are under de Russian government would be satisfied to have as much freedom as you have here in England. It is true you are not satisfied, but dat is because your working classes do not know how to use dere freedom. Dey are at de mercy of any educated man who talks to dem, because dey will not take de trouble to tink out dese questions for demselves. In t’ought we are freer dan you are.”

“ The only free people are they who are masters of themselves. The people who have conquered their own passions and desires can be free under any government,” said Jessie Newman quietly.

Karl Brietsen threw back his head impatiently. “ Ah, dat is all right for de saints, but de ordinary man is not a saint ; he wants to be free to live his own life in de way he tinks best. Free to make his own laws and to choose his own government. What right has a government which I have not helped to elect to say dat I must give up my career and serve de best years of my life in an army which is kept up solely to protect de property of de very class which oppresses me ? What right have dey to suppose dat I am such a fool, and dat I shall be willing to turn traitor to my own class ? I will never be loyal to a government dat would make me shoot my own people when dey cause a disturbance because dey are starving. No ; I belong to de people and I will live for dem, and when I fight it shall always be on de side of de oppressed, and never on de side of de oppressor.”

His face was flushed, there were passionate gleams in his eyes, and the lines around his mouth were tense and hard. He seemed to have forgotten us altogether : the great cause had claimed him.

I learnt later that, young though he was, only twenty-three, he had had a varied career. Had been a revolutionist from boyhood, writing and distributing revolutionary literature. He had been suspected by the police,

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But here was a woman dressed as for an evening party ; a black lace gown with an undertone of pink, cut very low in the neck and with no sleeves to speak of, with strings of pearls around her neck and golden bangles on her arms, and a deep red rose in her fashionably dressed hair. All this magnificence to sit down to a vegetarian supper in a kitchen, with men, many of them in peasant blouses, and all in ordinary working attire. It was too astonishing.

Seeing me still standing in the doorway staring at her, she spoke rapidly in Russian. I shook my head and said, "I am English."

She laughed. "Then you no spik Russian. I spik not English good, but French or German?"

I again shook my head. She smiled complacently, I thought.

"You Engleesh very bad for languages, but we are very clever. We learn quick quick. I come to England I stay tree monts I will learn." She spoke these sentences brokenly, with many pauses between.

"Perhaps. There is nothing like having a good opinion of yourself to start with," I thought. Aloud I said, "Oh, you are staying in England for three months, are you. In this house?"

"Noa, Madame Kovalevsky say noa room; so I find sleeping room in one cottage."

Just then the bell rang for supper, and immediately after came Katrina, to speak to my room mate, for she quickly followed her downstairs, leaving a strong smell of perfume behind her.

My first thought was to rush to the table and see what I had left lying about. To my astonishment I found that every vestige of my secretarial work had disappeared: there were only my own personal letters and papers. I stood there and stared. What could be the meaning of it all, and who had taken them away? Not the stranger, certainly, for a lace evening dress is not the place to hide big packets of letters, even if she had cared to do so. No, some one must have removed

them before she was taken to my room. But who? Mr. Kovalevsky and Karl Brietsen, the only ones who could possibly take any interest in my work, had been away. Then it must have been Mrs. Kovalevsky, although so far she had never appeared to take the slightest interest in anything I did. And why should she have taken these precautions? I asked myself. The letters were all in English, and the stranger evidently knew but little of that language. Then again her being locked in my room was extremely peculiar. There must be some mystery about this woman, but being ignorant of the Russian language I was not the one to solve it, however much I might wish to. Curiosity led me to open my blotting pad to see what she had been writing when I entered the room, even though I could not read it.

To my surprise I found that she had written in English, had copied my name and address, forming her letters as near to the original as she could get them. Evidently her boast to learn our language in three months would prove no empty one if she made use of every opportunity in this fashion. Then remembering I should be late for supper I hastily washed, changed my skirt, and went downstairs.

The large table at which I usually sat being full, I took my seat at the small one with Katrina and Sophy and two others. There was a good deal of laughing and undertoned remarks, and once I caught the name Olga Sharapoff, and I guessed they were talking about the stranger, but I could not tell.

I did not leave the table as soon as supper was finished, which was my usual custom, for I did not quite know what to do. My secretarial work had been taken away, and the stranger's things were still in my room. Should I be expected to share it with her, I wondered? I fervently hoped not.

After the tea, when Mr. and Mrs. Kovalevsky and the stranger had left the kitchen, I managed to speak to Karl Brietsen and tell him of my dilemma. He

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is not clever enough for that I should imagine. She shows her hand too freely."

He looked puzzled. "How do you mean? Show her hand? I do not understand."

"I beg pardon. What I meant to say was that she lets everyone know what *she* wants to know, instead of gaining her knowledge secretly, which is what a spy would aim at, I should think."

"Ah, yes, dat is so, and yet she may be more dangerous to us dan if she were a very clever spy. We should know what to do den, but now she wants to be our friend, to give us money and to work wid us. But we have no room for such babblers."

"Wouldn't it be wiser to treat her as a friend though? I do not know anything of your work, but it seems to me if you are doing anything which you wish to conceal she is likely to draw attention to it. I should never have known that you did any work apart from Mr. Kovalevsky if she had not questioned me. And don't you think as long as you baffle her curiosity that she will go on asking questions, and so raise suspicion about you and your work?"

His face grew hard and angry and there was a fierce gleam in his eyes as he replied, "Yes, yes, dat is so. She is a little devil. We shall have to leave dis place, I expect, and yet if it had not been for her, it is just de place for us."

Then he relapsed into silence, and we did not speak again until we got to the foot of Stourwood Hill. Dismounting, we seated ourselves on some felled pine trees, at least I did. Karl Brietsen threw himself on the heather, and pushing his broad-brimmed hat to the back of his head looked up at the blue sky, but I doubt if he saw it. It was a clear, beautiful morning, the sun was shining hotly and the birds were singing joyously as though from sheer gladness that they were alive. Some bees had been tempted out to look for honey and were humming around us as though it were summer.

entered. A rapid conversation ensued, and then Mr. Kovalevsky turned to me and said smilingly—

“I am sorry you have been inconvenienced, Miss Tremayne, but my wife thought your room would be safest until my return, but in future Olga Sharapoff will work in my wife’s room. But as I said before, until we know that she is what she professes to be, you had better lock your door when you leave your room, and also be very careful what you say to her, for she may know a great deal more English than she professes to. Here are the letters which were taken away, and will you correct these proofs which came this evening?”

Judging that I was dismissed, I gathered up all my work and left. I worked on until early morning, feeling too restless and excited to sleep, and when I did drop off to sleep at last, my dreams were coloured by the events of the day, only by some strange process I was turned into a Russian spy, and Olga Sharapoff was denouncing me to Karl Brietsen.

During the next fortnight an atmosphere of mystery seemed to fill the house, discussions which I understood had hitherto been of nightly occurrence were either not commenced or were broken off abruptly at Miss Sharapoff’s entrance, and to my surprise everybody seemed to have a desire to speak English. I was asked questions and led on to talk about things English in a way which was very gratifying to my feelings. For the first time I began to feel content to stay on at Seadown House, and the terrible fits of loneliness and longing to get among my own country people which at first had made me think I should have to write to Aunt Jane and tell her I could not stay here more than a week, were forgotten. Nay! When Mr. Kovalevsky spoke to me about some new departure in English literary work which he thought of undertaking, provided he could rely on my help, and spoke as though my stay among them might be prolonged indefinitely, I assented without ever reminding him that I had from the first only contemplated a stay of a few weeks. I felt so pleased



and gratified that he should consider my assistance of value to him, that as usual when in his presence I forgot my own affairs completely, and was only conscious of a strenuous desire to do the work he asked of me.

This I learnt later was the attitude of most of the people whom he gathered round him. As long as he desired their help and would exert himself to retain their allegiance, they were his willing slaves. It was only when he tired of them, or indulging in a fit of temper put no restraint on that fatal fluency of speech, which resembled nothing so much as a mountain torrent, allowed himself to say whatever anger or contempt suggested to him, that the spell was broken. He had himself cut the invisible bonds which bound his slaves to him, and once their intelligence freed from the spell he had exerted over them, they often went to the other extreme and became his severest critics. But this I did not learn until much later, and if any one had said as much to me during the early part of my visit I should not have believed them.

It was a fortnight after Miss Sharapoff's disquieting entrance among us that the anxiously expected letter from Russia arrived. Contrary to expectation it confirmed Miss Sharapoff's account of herself, and all vigilance was relaxed. Everybody seemed to heave a sigh of relief and the household fell back into its old familiar ways, except that I no longer felt so alien and so isolated as I had at first considered myself to be. One or another would now often explain to me the subject of discussion, while Miss Sharapoff seized every opportunity to converse with me. Not from any feeling of friendship she entertained for me, of that I was convinced, but simply to improve her English. She had suggested during the first week of her stay that I should give her lessons, but remembering Mr. Kovalevsky's instructions I had refused on the plea of other work, and when the embargo on my relations towards her was withdrawn I had grown suspicious of her on another count.

I took offence at the way in which she persistently

questioned me about Karl Brietsen. What did I think of him and of his views ? Did I know anything of his work ? To that I replied that he was Mr. Kovalevsky's business manager and secretary, I believed.

"Naat, naat," she broke in impatiently. "I mean what he do in dat cauttage he stay so long ? He not tell me, only laugh. Why ? I alzo am Soashilist, I alzo will work, why he not let me ? In Russia I join Secret Society. What for he not tell me sings ?"

"I cannot say. I know very little of Mr. Brietsen or his beliefs," I repeated stiffly.

"But you bissycle with him, and he talk English, why you not tell me ?" she asked suspiciously.

"But there is nothing to tell. We talk about English life and customs mostly," I answered rather curtly, for I began to feel annoyed at her persistent questioning.

"Ah, you not tell me. I will learn English quick quick, then I know," and she left me with a vague feeling of uneasiness.

What was the drift of all these questions ? Why was she suspicious about the way in which Karl Brietsen employed his spare time ? I knew vaguely that he was a revolutionist, and that he belonged to a cause, that he fiercely disbelieved in an autocratic government, but beyond that I knew but little of him. And except in a general way I had asked no questions. It was not my nature to be suspicious or inquisitive, nor was I given to imagining mysteries where none existed. I was on the other hand, however, rather reticent, and not given to talking about my own affairs, but simply because I was not sure of myself, and feared ridicule if I could not accomplish what I had talked of doing. But otherwise there was nothing in my life which I wished to hide, and hence I was not given to scenting mysteries in other people's lives. Hitherto I had always taken people as I found them, nor imagined them to be other than they represented themselves to be, but now in this atmosphere of excitement and mystery, I also began to grow suspicious and to look for hidden motives. Why did

getting on our machines we rode home at the same high speed that we had come by.

After that I had many rides and talks with Karl Brietsen. He was my one friend in the house, the only one with whom I could converse familiarly. I have thought since that perhaps it was pleasant to him to have someone to unfold his views to who was not too critical, but who yet stimulated conversation by not always agreeing with him.

As for myself I was often both frightened and fascinated with his conversation. Fascinated by the young, strong, overmastering enthusiasm for the cause which seemed to claim him, body and soul, and frightened at the fierce class hatred which he sometimes gave expression to. When he spoke of the sufferings of the poor, patient, down-trodden, ignorant peasant, and of the numerous ways in which his labour was exploited to keep up the luxury and idleness of the aristocrat, and quoted, as he sometimes did, with flashing eyes and dramatic gestures, those lines from Edward Markham's *Sower*—

“ He is the stone rejected, yet the stone  
Whereon is built metropolis and throne ;  
Out of his toil come all their pompous shows,  
Their purple luxury and plush repose !  
The grime of this bruised hand keeps tender white  
The hands that never labour day nor night.  
His feet that know only the field's rough floors  
Send lordly steps down echoing corridors ; ”

my pity for the worker and indignation against the rich governing classes of all nations grew almost as fierce as his. But when he spoke of the time, which he hoped was near at hand, when there would be a great and simultaneous uprising of the workers in all the provinces of Russia, when, should all other means fail, armed resistance would be resorted to, I grew frightened and drew back. I could not explain why, but I was firmly convinced that no good and righteous cause could ever be built upon a foundation that was red

with blood. Better be forever among the oppressed than to become the oppressor.

Sometimes at such a remark from me he would grow angry and cite case after case of people in Russia who had been guilty of nothing more heinous than the reading of a revolutionary tract or of having a letter from a friend who was a socialist, who were thrown into prison without trial, not knowing whether they would have to remain there for months or years. Must such a government as that be tolerated simply because the blood of a few tyrants might otherwise be shed? But more often he grew satirical, and with a mocking light in his eyes would exclaim—

“Why! how can you call yourself a Christian and object to bloodshed? Do you not go out to convert the heathen wid a Bible in one hand and a sword in de oder? You say to dem take our Jesus or we will take your life. I tink your Jesus would be very much ashamed of His disciples. I tink He would have respected more ze Jews, for dey only crucified His body once, but you crucify His teaching once, twice, always. You say on Sundays it is true, and on week days it is impossible. Your Jesus said, “Blessed are ze poor,” and you make His teaching a lie by turning poverty into a curse. Go and live in one of your stinking slums in London, work in a sweater’s den as I did when I came to England first, and den say if you dare ‘Blessed are ze poor.’ Why! if all who say dey are followers of Jesus acted up to His teaching, there would be no need for revolutionists. It is because you do *not* believe it, that we revolutionists have to take up the work which ze Christians profess to do. *We* are working for de oppressed, *we* will give dem liberty and freedom and a chance to live clean, healt’y lives. We will make it impossible for de people who do not work to live in luxury while de labourers have not enough food to eat. Look at de aristocracy of every country, do dey not belong to de State Church, to de orthodox and only true Church, and yet dey gather taxes from

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people who are half starving. Bah! I would be ashamed to call myself a Christian, I would rader be called a tief."

The words had come out in a breathless torrent, steeped in such utter scorn that I have no difficulty in recalling them, for they burnt themselves on my memory.

At first the knowledge that he was an acknowledged atheist, and believed only in this life, gave me a kind of shock. But afterwards when I learnt how he and his comrades, though disbelieving in the blessedness of poverty, or even in the righteousness of simplicity, contending that the workers of the world have a right to a full share of all the luxuries which their labour produces ; yet for the sake of the cause lived simply and fared hardly, in order that they might devote all their spare time and money to the spreading of their ideas, holding themselves in readiness at any time to risk their freedom, and possibly their lives, by going back to Russia ; then, it seemed to me, call themselves what they liked, they were Christians. For is not Christianity love ? And "Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friend."

## CHAPTER IX

### A LAODICEAN

LITTLE by little the walls of conventionalism and prejudice which had enclosed what I called my mind were broken down. To dogmatize on any subject seemed an absurdity, and I began to feel as though my mind was always in open country, where there were no sheltering hedges of tradition or custom behind which it could stop and rest. I could not help listening to the discussions which went on all round me, for we had many English visitors, and to listen was to think, and to think was always to be animated by a restless desire to know more. In the eagerness of an awakening intellect I thought only of acquiring knowledge, of understanding the subjects which I heard discussed so freely. I was ashamed of my ignorance, and feverishly anxious to make up for lost time. I listened without quite realizing how insidiously my old beliefs were being undermined. Beliefs which I had never before heard questioned were pushed to one side with the careless indifference with which an expert tin miner will wash away the sand that is gathered around the ore, even while to the uninitiated it all appears of equal value.

For some time I was only vaguely conscious of the dangerous ground over which my mind was being hurried. Looking back with disgust at my past vegetable existence, as I termed it, I was content to feel that I was acquiring knowledge, that I was covering the ground ; but to what goal I was speeding, or in what

country I should find myself, I never stopped to think. Motion alone was progress in those days. Then all at once for some reason which I cannot explain I grew frightened, and longed for the old landmarks, even though they could be proved to be delusions. And when just at this time I was asked to attend some evangelical Bible meetings that were being held in a little mission room near by, I assented willingly, eager to see if it would be possible for me to return to the orthodox beliefs in which I had been reared. But although it gave me pleasure, and recalled happy memories to sing the hymns and listen to the Bible readings, yet I could not get back the old unquestioning faith. Doubts had been sown in my mind which would not be stilled.

The lady who held the services was, I believe, a sincere Christian according to the orthodox acceptation of that term. She held firmly to the old comfortable belief that God had called some to be rich and some to be poor, instancing the parable of the talents ; and if each one did his or her duty in the station of life to which it had pleased God to call them, then were they the children of God, and fulfilling the mission for which they had been sent into the world. Why some should be born to poverty and hardship, and others to wealth and luxury, I never heard her try to explain. I noticed that she usually selected for her Bible readings those mystical passages which deal almost entirely with the happiness of a future life ; and nearly all her teaching seemed to imply that we must not look for a reward for right living in this life, but in the life to come. It was soothing and perhaps comforting, but somehow it did not seem helpful. We had to live in the present, but we were pointed always to some hypothetical future. (I thought of Karl Brietsen, who, believing in no future life, wanted to bring about a revolution which should bring *his* heaven here and now to the hard-worked poor of the earth.) At one time I should have listened to it all unquestioningly, and after leaving

the room have thought no more about it, but now I wanted something more definite. I did not so much want soothing as convincing.

Often as I sat there and listened to the clear enunciation of the reader, and looked at her tall, commanding figure, which, though plainly, was perfectly draped in the richest and most costly garments, every detail of which was studied, and then turned my eyes on her audience, the incongruity and disparity of it all struck me. Here, on the one hand, was the favourite of fortune (and also of God, for had she not been given ten talents ?), to whom poverty was only a name, and personal hardship a thing unknown, who had sufficient leisure to enjoy all the broadness of outlook and the enlightenment which foreign travel brings, and an income large enough to relieve distress when brought into contact with it, and, as a consequence, was able to enjoy that peculiar pleasing satisfaction which charity bestowed alone can bring. And, on the other hand, where those poor hard-working women of the village, with their bovine, half-asleep faces, listening patiently enough, never doubting anything which was told them simply because they hadn't sufficient intelligence for that, their minds having received even less attention than their bodies. Those hard-worked, often unwieldy bodies, on whom no care had been spent to hide imperfections. Nay, rather attention had been drawn to them by the cheap ill-fitting garments they wore, and as I looked I wondered by what process of reasoning this rich titled woman could be willing to sit there and point the contrast between the rich and the poor, and still tell them that we must all be content to remain in the station in life into which it had pleased God to call us. In the sight of God we might all be equal, but in the sight of man how terribly unequal. Not alone the inequality of birth and intellect, but the terrible inequality of opportunity.

Long before the summer ended, and our titled visitor had gone for the winter to a more genial climate,



I had come to the conclusion that I could never again accept the orthodox interpretation of the old faith.

Not finding much help in these evangelical meetings, and wishing to keep an open mind, I went to all kinds of services that summer which were within walking or cycling distance.

I think I liked more than any the Salvation Army meetings. Here there was no disparity to excite criticism. All were equal, for all were poor, and all simply dressed. There was, too, a joyousness about their services which appealed to me. The musical part was so hearty and spontaneous, it was as though they sought to express all their hopes, feelings and desires in their songs, and I felt that I could join in with most of their aspirations quite sincerely. They were poor, and hard-worked, yet their faith made them happy. It was a working everyday faith, a faith which believeth all things, and hopeth all things. It sweetened life and bridged over death.

Once in London I saw a Salvation Army funeral, and it was the most hopeful funeral, may I say ? and also the most impressive I have ever seen. The hearse and the coffin were covered with flowers, and in all that long, long procession of relatives and friends I saw hardly any of that soul-depressing black, which so adds to the terrors of death. But, first of all, was the band playing silver instruments, and dressed in their ordinary red shirts ; no black, save for a piece of crape round the drum. The music was solemn yet inspiring, and all the time as I listened to it, it seemed to be saying of their dead brother, "he hath gone up on high." It was not so much of death, but of a new life, which that Salvation Army funeral spoke. But, to return. Although I sympathized very much with the aims of the Army, and admired very much their hard, self-sacrificing labours, yet their teaching lacked something which I needed. A religion which appealed only to the emotions was not enough. The singing was the

best part ; the addresses were often little more than assertions. They seemed to take for granted that everything *they* believed was infallible and unassailable. There is no doubt that this position is one of the great sources of their strength, but it also prevents people from joining them who want to keep an open mind, and so will not subscribe to a dogmatic theology.

After this I went with a young Russian gentleman who lived near by to some theosophical meetings. He was an ardent theosophist, and a student of most of the Eastern philosophies. Whether I was especially dense, or whether it was, as he apologetically explained, that those essays to which I listened were not for the general public, but were more especially addressed to those of the inner circle, I could understand but very little of what was said. The most I could gather from their teaching was that the audience were to strive after beautiful thoughts, and then, by the aid of thought transference, the whole world would in time be permeated and regenerated by these little winged messengers. This idea seemed a very beautiful one to me, but it did not altogether satisfy my practical mind. It was too aesthetic, too nearly allied to an easy chair philosophy. It is not enough to think beautiful thoughts ; noble action must follow to make them of service to the world. Besides, only the elect, it seemed to me, could interpret the atmosphere of a beautiful thought in order to be able to respond to it.

I very soon came to the conclusion that theosophy was not for the poor illiterate multitude, but only for the cultured few. And yet, as I looked around at some of the people gathered there, they did not appear to me to be above the average in intellect. Was it possible that they all understood those essays, or were they, like myself, only trying to understand them ? At any rate, the teaching there was too abstract and elusive for my powers of assimilation, and after three or four meetings I gave them up.

I also went to some Unitarian services, but they

seemed to me to have gone to the other extreme of the Salvation Army. Emotion was here left entirely out of account, and the intellect only was appealed to. There was such a lack of warmth and of human feeling in it all, that I turned away cold and sad and more perplexed than ever.

The place I went oftenest to, however, was to some meetings held in a small hall at our nearest large town. Not because I particularly cared for them, but for the sake of the company going and coming, for many in Seadown House went every Sunday. The promoters of those meetings had decided that they would not be tied down to any line of thought or argument by calling these gatherings by any distinctive title, but that they should be known simply as the Tennyson Hall meetings. As might have been supposed, however, this was not sufficient for the Inspired Porter, and he had dubbed the hall the "Hecklers' Paradise," and one of his favourite jokes was to ask people if they were going to Paradise to-night.

I found the "Hecklers' Paradise" at times a very warm spot, for the meetings attracted many people of widely divergent beliefs. But the majority were Socialists drawn there by the fact that their old comrade Billy often spoke, and also by the weekly announcement that any one was at liberty to speak in the discussion which followed each address. This was, I think, the chief attraction, for there are always numbers of men who would rather hear their own voices than any other.

I cannot say I received any great help from those meetings, although questions on all subjects were discussed, for we seemed always to be travelling round in a circle. They were all agreed as to the many wrongs that were going on in the world, but when it came to the discussion of a working theory by which these wrongs might be righted everybody disagreed, and I began to think that Billy was inspired when he named it the "Hecklers' Paradise."

What astonished me very much was the utter lack of sympathy between Mr. Kovalevsky and the Socialists. I had expected that he would have marched side by side with them in all matters of social reform, and that he would have been far ahead of them in matters spiritual. That he would have not only been with them in advocating justice for the working man, which, I take it, is the main plank of the Socialist platform, but that here among working men (for they were mostly that) he would have lived that doctrine of love towards all men (which surely includes tolerance of all shades of belief), which I had supposed was the keynote of his religious or ethical teaching. But I was astonished to find him more bitterly opposed to Socialism than even to an autocratic government. I could not reconcile this fact with the views I had heard him express, until one day a friend of Jessie Newman's enlightened me by saying—

“Can you not understand that once an aristocrat always an aristocrat? Spite of all his professed democratic beliefs, he is an aristocrat at bottom. He can contemplate anarchy, Christian anarchy, where no one shall be master and no one servant with great equanimity, for this seems to him a very beautiful ideal, but that he, an aristocrat, should ever be under a government elected by, and perhaps composed of, working people, is too much for him to contemplate. To voluntarily give up most of the external appearances of an aristocrat's life, and to live among the working classes as an equal, does not appal him in the least, for at bottom he knows, although I do not think he would admit it, that he can never strip himself of that superiority which a cultured intellect and high birth gives a man.”

‡ How often I would have liked to ask Mr. Kovalevsky questions on these subjects, but I never had the courage, and so I could only judge of him by his written articles and addresses. That he was a man who held many high and beautiful theories I was well aware, but

whether his practice came anyway near his theories I had yet to learn. I have read somewhere that no man can be truly great who is not master of himself, and long before I left Seadown House I had come to the conclusion that repressing passions and self-mastery are not very general Russian characteristics.

In writing thus lengthily of my own doings I have omitted to mention Miss Sharapoff, for the simple reason that all through the summer she had been away. She had gone to Switzerland, but gave us to understand that she should return again for the autumn. Had this not been so, I have a suspicion that my quest for what Jessie Newman had termed "a working belief" could not have been so continuous, nor would it have absorbed so much of my attention. For although I had from the first withdrawn myself as much as possible from the disquieting presence of that tirelessly energetic young woman, still I never met her but she managed to chain my attention for the time being. It was impossible for me to think my own thoughts after she had managed to "corner" me in a conversation. For she, like Mr. Kovalevsky, had that strangely intense overmastering power which enabled her to make any subject which was exciting her exciting to all to whom she talked.

And so when I returned to Seadown House in September, after having spent a fortnight in London, and met Miss Sharapoff on the drive as I was going up to the house, I felt my pulse quicken, and the blood rushing to my cheeks in a way which annoyed me. "Why should this woman have the power to excite me in this manner?" I asked myself. And a feeling of anger crept into my heart against her, for I felt that her presence had spoilt all the pleasure of my return.

## CHAPTER X

### POINTS OF VIEW

I HAD gone to London at Aunt Jane's special request. My cousin Janet, whom I have not before mentioned, was home from boarding school, and Aunt Jane thought her visit would be pleasanter if she had some one nearer her own age to be with. Of Janet Dunn I had seen but little, although I had heard much. Both Uncle Seth and Aunt Jane thought nothing too good or costly for their only child, and she, having from her first year at boarding school taken a tremendous dislike to the shop and all pertaining to it, had spent very little of her time at home.

During the year I was there, she had insisted on spending all her holidays at the home of a French governess for whom she had conceived a violent attachment. That these holidays had to be paid for out of Aunt Janet's private purse I was fairly certain, but Aunt Jane seldom complained to me unless she was feeling more than usually upset at her child's indifference to her home. But now Janet had been home for a week and had expressed a desire to see me, hence Aunt Jane's pressing request for my company.

It seemed strange to me to go back to London, for although I had not been away quite eight months, yet I had lived so much during that time that I felt as though it had been as many years. All the same I was surprised to find Janet, whom I had last seen a little girl in short frocks, now quite grown-up. She was but just turned sixteen, and yet she carried herself and spoke as though

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she were twenty. I could see by the rapid glance with which she seemed to take in all the points of my rather old-fashioned costume that she had written me down as a dowdy, but I also saw that she was not ill-pleased at that, for did it not set off her own petite elegance? She was really glad to see me, I believe, and as she escorted me to my room chattered away as familiarly as if days instead of years had passed since we last met. She was extremely curious about her mother's Russian relatives, and plied me with endless questions about them, their house, and the people who lived with them, all of which I answered as well as I could. I could see she was interested, and when we were having tea she looked across at her mother with a pout, and said—

"I can't for the life of me see why I mightn't have gone down to Seadown for a day or two and fetched Linda home as I had wanted to."

"You know your father wouldn't allow it, so what is the use of your worrying, dearie?" replied Aunt Jane in her good-humoured way. "He was not at all pleased that Belinda should stay on so long, and had it not been for the fact that I assured him that she would never make out anything in the shop he would have insisted on my writing for her to come home long ago."

"That was very good of you, Aunt Jane, for I had come to the same conclusion long before I left London."

"Catch father getting me to serve in the shop," commented Janet scornfully.

"Oh, I think he has quite given up that idea for you, dear, but you see Belinda is in a different position. But really, I do think you are wasting your time down there," and Aunt Jane turned her handsome face towards me.

Was I? I wondered. I had not thought much about it. My life had been so full at Seadown House, I had lived so much in the present that I had scarce given a thought to the future, and I know that I was no exception to the rule there. Everybody was too restless, too absorbed in their plans and schemes of to-day to trouble

about to-morrow. They were all so full of youth and vigour, that old age and its requirements had no place in their thoughts. To have enough for to-day's needs and to let to-morrow take care of itself was the atmosphere of the house. To be otherwise was to be spoken of laughingly as an "Israelite." There was not only the easy indifference of the aristocrat who, like Mr. Kovalevsky, had always been accustomed to spend lavishly, knowing that there were large funds at his back if he choose to take them, but there was also the reckless carelessness of the revolutionist who never knows what a day may bring forth, or whether his future may not be spent in a prison. And so when Aunt Jane spoke I felt as though she had introduced a new idea.

"Aren't you getting anything for being secretary?" asked Janet curiously.

"I get my food, lodging, and washing, and I expect that is about as much as I am worth," I answered laughingly.

Janet screwed her nose up. "No wonder you dress so shabbily. Mother, she ought to have a whole lot of new things while she is here."

"No, no," I hastened to interrupt. "Indeed I mustn't. You've no idea how plainly everybody dresses down there. I should feel quite out of place in fashionable new clothes."

"Bosh! You can't go on wearing that old black for ever."

I was still wearing the black dress I had worn at my mother's funeral.

"I mean to buy myself a new hat and one or two coloured blouses to freshen me up, but otherwise my things will have to last me another twelve months," I answered Janet decidedly, for I did not wish Aunt Jane to think for a minute that I expected anything from her.

"It is well you feel like that, Belinda, as you are earning nothing, for clothes run away with a lot of money," was Aunt Jane's reply.



A week later, as though she had been thinking things over, she said to me, "Must you return to Seadown House, Belinda? Had you not better stay here and look around for something else by which you can earn your living?"

"Oh, I must go back, for I promised Mr. Kovalevsky I would. He has heaps of work always for me to do, and even if he hadn't, or if he decided to get a man to help him, as I sometimes think he will, I should like to go to the Colony for a little while, and see what the life there is like."

"The Colony!" echoed Aunt Jane and Janet both together.

"Yes; there are a lot of people living near us who have bought some land, and are growing most of their own foodstuffs, and they have asked me to join them."

"But surely you aren't going to be such a simpleton?" asked Aunt Jane in quite a sharp way for her, towards me. "I know we have no control over you, for you are of age, though I must say you don't act so, but you ought to remember that Seth is your mother's brother, and he feels that he has a right in some measure to control your actions."

"It is very kind of Uncle Seth, but I think I would prefer to control them myself," I replied, very coldly, I'm afraid.

Aunt Jane gave me a humorous look as she returned to her duties in the shop. She had no doubt I was getting on rather worse than usual with Uncle Seth, for though I had tried to be particularly careful not to offend his prejudices, yet it seemed to me that I could not give an honest opinion on any subject without offending him. He had been elected a member of the Town Council during my absence, and whether he considered that this qualified him to give an authoritative opinion on every subject, or whether his dissenting element in me which needed no exception, I cannot say, but I found him more pugnacious in my opinion more hopelessly retrograde than ever.

He always talked as though the only people who had any right to live in England were the upper and middle classes; all the others were here on sufferance. The lower classes, according to him, were mostly composed of skulking thieves and paupers, while their homes were little better than plague spots, and a menace to the whole nation.

"Poverty is a blot on our civilization," he asserted pompously one evening after supper.

"Quite true," I assented.

Uncle Seth looked at me with a complacent smile, and continued—

"And why? Simply because only the lazy and the improvident have any need to be poor in this country. Look at me. I began life with nothing, and yet with hard work and perseverance I have built up a flourishing business, and am now a member of the Town Council."

"It is really remarkable," I could not help saying.

"You are right there, Belinda, it is. But the lesson I want to draw from my own experience is, that if people are poor they deserve to be. I am sick of all this talk of the Socialists about justice for the working-classes. We provide them with work and give them a good wage, and they do nothing but grumble. Look at the amount of money we spend every year on our poor houses and prisons, our asylums and hospitals. And who are they for? Who fill them to overflowing? Why, the so-called working-classes, simply because they are lazy and worthless. It is a wonder to me how we put up with them as patiently as we do."

"All the same I am afraid that rich people would fare but badly if it weren't for these very troublesome working-classes," I managed to insinuate, while Uncle Seth was taking breath.

"You don't know what you are talking about, Belinda," was his contemptuous reply. "What would the working classes do without the rich people, that is the question?"

"Very much better than the rich people could do

without them, I should say, for I suppose you will acknowledge that the working-classes are the producers."

"The working-classes the producers! Good gracious, child, whatever are you talking about? Why, you must know that it is the man with the money and the brains, the master, who is the producer."

"But, uncle," I protested, "if the working man did not plough the ground and put the seed in, we shouldn't get any corn, no matter how much brains or money the master had."

"But who bought the seed for the man to put in, and who owns the ground in which it is planted? Tell me, what would be the use of the working man without his master's money? Really, Belinda, excuse me, but I think yours are the weakest arguments I ever heard."

Ignoring this last remark I replied, "But people had food to eat and clothes to wear long before there was any money coined."

"We were talking about the present day, I believe," said Uncle Seth cuttingly.

"Yes; but if you want to get at the root of a matter you must go back to first causes, mustn't you?" I asked, feeling, I must confess, rather disconcerted.

"Oh, I don't want to go back to first causes. England and to-day is good enough for me. Still, if *you* wish it, how did Adam get his first seed corn, may I ask?"

"I'm sure I don't know. How should you think he got it?" I retorted, feeling amused at this new form of attack.

"By barter, of course," was the reply with a satisfied nod. "He gave something else for his seed which was an equivalent. So there you have the root of the whole matter. The man who did the bartering then, or who now buys the grain, is the producer."

Knowing that Uncle Seth firmly believed that Adam was the first man his reply was distinctly tempting,

but as any discussion about Adam might lead me on to dangerous ground I was silent, and Uncle Seth continued gravely—

“While you are with us, Belinda, I shall be glad if you will refrain from repeating any more of the Socialists’ cut and dried arguments, for that’s what your talk amounts to. I have an utter contempt for all Socialists, for in my estimation they are a lot of lying, misleading scoundrels, for whom hanging is too good.”

After this sweeping statement I thought it better to hold my tongue, no matter what was said. But as Uncle Seth never missed an opportunity of giving forth his views, to keep silent was often a hard matter, and by the time my fortnight was up, I was looking forward eagerly to my return to Seadown.

Not that I had forgotten the many lonely and unhappy hours I had spent there, nor the many times I had suffered that sickening feeling of disappointment which arose from having worked far on into the small hours of the morning to complete some “urgent” piece of work, only to learn perhaps weeks later that it had never been used at all. Still, spite of these drawbacks I was glad to return to Seadown House, for there was at least freedom of speech there; but at Uncle Seth’s, to advance an idea that was new to him was to be looked at with suspicion and almost disgust.

Strange though it may seem, in leaving Uncle Seth’s house, which was situated in the centre of a thickly populated London suburb scarcely an hour’s ’bus ride from the heart of the city, to go down to a little sleepy, undeveloped watering-place in the very heart of the country, I yet considered that I was leaving stagnation behind me, and going into a place of progressive thought. So much was I influenced by the people with whom I was brought into immediate contact, that for the time being they formed my world.

What mattered it to me that all round me lay London. That magic city which contains within its walls some specimen of everything that is considered of value in

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the civilized world. My London was the suburb in which Uncle Seth lived. And what was it to me that I could not go into the street without meeting a never-ceasing stream of people if with not one of them I exchanged a single idea? For aught I knew to the contrary the men might all be like Uncle Seth, and the women like Aunt Jane. That this was not the case I felt very certain, but unfortunately for me the people I met at Uncle Seth's house all seemed to share in his ambitions. I think it would be quite easy to judge of a host or hostess' mental make up by the kind of friends you meet at their house. And after all is it not the people we are constantly mixing with who influence us most? If they talk of nothing else but the making of money and the keeping up of a certain style in their houses or their dress, little by little, at first quite unknown to us, we become influenced by their point of view. It is not always what we desire for ourselves, but what we think our friends or the circle we move in expect of us, that often decides our conduct.

During the eight months I had been away from London I had not heard, all put together, an hour's conversation about the fashions, and yet in the fortnight I was with Aunt Jane and Janet I heard but little else. No matter what other subject of conversation might be introduced, it inevitably came back to what was to them *the* topic of the day. Little by little, spite of my desire to the contrary, I found myself influenced by their point of view. My clothes, which I had scarcely given a thought to, now bothered me by their old-fashioned appearance, and although I hadn't the slightest intention of buying new ones, yet I was conscious of the fact that if I remained much longer with Aunt Jane and Janet, I should weakly yield to the force of their example, and spend money which I knew I ought not to.

And so it was that when the train steamed out of the terminus, I settled back into my corner with a great sigh of relief. At Seadown House I might be carried into what Uncle Seth would consider dangerous realms of

thought, which might even cost me much mental suffering, but anything was preferable to losing my own self-respect, and this I had felt I should do if I remained very long at Uncle Seth's.

time, that he had a purpose in leading me on to talk of the Colony, and in encouraging my half-playfully expressed desire to see what a colony life was like. And although I had as I thought quite decided to stay on at Seadown House if I could, yet in a short time after my return from London, without in the least understanding how the change had come about, I looked on it as quite a settled matter that I should shortly go to the Colony.


The days, however, passed by and lengthened into weeks, and the weeks became months, and nothing more was said about my leaving, and then early in the spring Karl Brietsen told me that he was going to leave. Big things were being done for the cause, large sums had been subscribed to spread their literature, and now it was necessary that someone with organizing ability should be on the Continent to receive and distribute that literature, and he had been the chosen agent.

"But will you be safe? Are you not already suspected?" I asked.

"Dat is no matter. I shall go."

"And Mr. Kovalevsky. Is he willing that you should leave him?" I asked curiously, for I could scarcely credit even Karl Brietsen with sufficient strength of purpose to break away if Mr. Kovalevsky wished him to remain. But I had forgotten the strength of the hold which the cause had on him.

"Ah, no; he is very, very grieved and angry wld me, and he will not believe dat I go, but I muz." And then as his face grew sad, almost wistful, he continued, "I am so sorry to leave all my dear friends and dis beautiful quiet Seadown. Ah, how I love de sea, and how I shall miss it. We are so far from de sea in Russia. How I love it in de night time when de moon is shining, and making a great white road, and de waves as dey come rolling in are all shimmering and shining like moving silver, while all around is de dark sea telling us revolutionists always to be strong and to keep on striving. Ah, yes, de sea is beautiful, always beautiful, but it must be given up like everything else. We revolu-



tionists are like soldiers : we receive our marching orders, and we leave all and go."

I felt the sadness of his mood stealing over me, but not wishing him to see it I hastened to ask, " But how will you get into Russia ? Won't you have a difficulty in getting a passport ? They know your name, don't they ? "

He threw back his head and laughed. " Ah, yes. I shall not go as Karl Brietsen. I will borrow a passport. How would it do if I got an English passport. I spik English now, and my clo'es are English. I will smoke big pipe and wear cap, and when anyone spik to me, I will draw myself up very stiff and frown and look angry, and when anyting goes wrong I will say, ' Damme, hurry up, can't you.' "

I laughed heartily at this assumption of English manners, but shook my head as I replied, " I think you had better go as a German, for you look like one. "

" Perhaps, but I am waiting for news from my friends. And now will you please keep all dis a secret ? I do not want anyone to know, and you must not say one word to de Sharapoff. "

" But the others in the house. Don't they know ? "

" Oh, yes ; dey are all friends. Dey are quite safe. "

They might be, and no doubt were all his friends, but whether they were safe or not was another matter. I who was an Englishwoman and therefore an outsider had yet seen that something new and exciting was on foot for days past. The atmosphere of the house was full of it. Everybody had seemed to be rushing about the house on aimless errands. At first I had thought that Mr. Kovalevsky might be going away for the night ; for these were the usual symptoms whenever he went for a journey to London or elsewhere, but as I was not on this occasion requested to hunt up telegraph forms, foreign and English, stamps of all prices, paper and envelopes of different sizes and weights, I came to the conclusion that something else was the



cause of all this commotion. Now I knew it was Karl Brietsen who was leaving us.

That Olga Sharapoff saw as much, most likely more than I did, I felt certain, for there was a brooding look on her face which I did not like. She seemed to say but little to anyone, which again I thought was suspicious, but nobody seemed to be thinking of her.

At last the day was fixed when he was to leave. I met him in the road outside the grounds, and he told me he was leaving early the next morning.

"Isn't this very sudden?" I asked.

"A leetle, but de Sharapoff has found out dat I am going away, and she tell one of our people she have all her boxes packed, and she will travel to London wid me, so I will go before she is up, by de eight o'clock express, which only stops at one or two big stations. Ah, I will how you say, give her one slip."

"I hope you will. But why is she going to London now?"

"Oh, she say she muz go to Paris, and she would like company."

"Does she know you are going to Russia?"

"I do not know. I am afraid. Dat is why she must not know where I stay in London. Bah! I hate her. But now I must say good-bye. I have a lot of people to see dis evening. Sometime, perhaps, we meet again."

I gave him my hand, and he covered it with both his own. His were hot and tremulous with excitement. There were strange gleams in his eyes, and I could see he had all he could do to control his emotions. The next minute he had dropped my hand, and said almost vexedly, "Ah, you English, you are so cold. You do not feel anything."

There was some ground for this complaint, for in me strong emotion only shows itself in a kind of numb indifference, and at such times I do and say the most ordinary things. And now, although I knew as I looked at the young strong eager face, how dangerous was the expedition on which he was bent, and how unlikely it

was that I should ever see him again, yet I could do nothing better than wish him, in the most conventional manner, a pleasant journey and success in his undertaking.

Just then one of his friends came out of the gate and, linking his arm in Brietsen's, they walked away, and a turning soon hid them from my view. He did not return to supper, and had not got back when I went to bed. I felt sad, sadder than I cared to own even to myself, and I felt vexed too that I should have seemed so unfeeling, and when I woke the next morning at half-past six, after a short and troubled sleep, I determined to rise and dress and see him once more. It was a dull, cloudy morning, and the room was almost dark even after I had drawn up my blind. I tried to hurry, but everything went wrong. One of the buttons of my dress came off, and I could not find it again, so I had to change into another dress. Then my hair would not keep in place, and I heard the clock downstairs strike seven before I was ready. Snatching up my handkerchief I hurried down into the kitchen, but found only Sophy there brushing over the stove. I noticed that her eyes were red. "Has he gone?" I asked in dismay.

She only nodded, and bent lower over the saucepan. Mechanically I sat down at the table and poured myself out a cup of tea and cut a slice of bread and butter. Mechanically too I ate it although the food had a way of sticking in my throat, which I did not like. I was just deciding that I could not possibly manage a second slice, when the door was opened, and Miss Sharapoff burst breathlessly into the room.

"Where is Brietsen?" she gasped.

"I do not know. I have not seen him yet," I answered quietly, and cutting myself another piece of bread, I forced myself to eat it. She stared at me in seeming bewilderment, and then said—

"But I see light in his room early, and now ze horse and ze cart are gone. Why?"

"Have they? Perhaps someone is coming from the

station. I have not heard. Would you like a cup of tea ? ”

She poured out a torrent of Russian in which the word Anglaise came in, so I guessed she was relieving her feelings by abusing me. Then all at once she stopped and put some questions to Sophy in a quiet voice, which the latter answered. I grew suspicious, but I could not interfere. I could not warn Sophy without Miss Sharapoff also hearing. The next minute she pulled out her watch, and then looking at me, said triumphantly, “ I will see him. Telford will make his horse go quick quick, if I give him much monish. I will say good-bye to Karl for you, Mees Tremayne,” and with a laugh she flew out of the house like a whirlwind. What was she going to do ? What had she learnt from Sophy ? The latter spoke and understood so little English that I despaired of learning much from her. All the same I asked, “ Who is Telford ? ”

“ He one farmer. He drives Mees Sharapoff to stashun.”

Then I saw it all. She intended to pay Telford so liberally that he would drive very fast and so catch the eight o'clock train. I looked at the clock—it was only just turned half-past seven. Could she do it, and, if so, what would Karl Brietsen do ? If he knew she was there could he not alter his plans and get to London by some other route, and so put her off the scent ? But he would not suspect. She might just catch the train at the last minute without his knowing she was there, and then she would follow him from the station. If I could only warn him !

I looked around the kitchen aimlessly until my eyes rested on a bicycle lamp on the dresser, and immediately my mind seemed to clear, for I saw a way to help.

Snatching a Tam-o'-shanter that hung on a wall and pinning it on tightly, I hurried to the large shed where we kept our bicycles. I got out my machine and was soon speeding down the drive, smiling to myself as I remembered that, thanks to the many breathless rides

I had had with Carl Brietsen, I was now a very fair cyclist. But to-day I must ride faster after him than I had ever ridden at his side.

As I was mounting the first long hill and feeling that I should have to follow my usual plan and walk the stiffest bit, I caught the sound of wheels in the distance. I felt certain that this was Miss Sharapoff. She had evidently wasted no time. I had no more thought of getting off, but easing the climb by taking the hill crossways, I reached the top, glad to find the next piece of road slightly on the incline. Here I was able to recover my breath, and by the time I got to the next hill there was no sound of horse's hoofs. But I would not slacken pace, and rode my hardest until I was within half a mile of the station. "I shall be there in a few minutes now," I told myself exultantly. But alas! for the plans that are built on pneumatic tyres. The next minute I felt my pace slacken, spite of the fact that I was pedalling my hardest. "A puncture," I thought with a groan as I alighted. I soon found the source of the mischief. A sharp nail had worked its way through the front tyre. I had not time to repair it, so tried pumping it hard, but it was no use, it would not hold the air. The only thing was to go the remainder of the way on foot.

There was very little traffic on the road, for it was still early, but as I walked on I caught the regular beat-beat of a horse's hoofs on the dry frosty road. Miss Sharapoff would soon overtake me now, and she would guess my errand, and I could imagine her hard scornful laugh when she saw my plight. The thought maddened me, and I broke into a run.

"Oh, if my machine had only held out for another five minutes," I thought passionately, feeling almost as if I could have struck the insensate thing.

I did not know what the time was, and I did not look ; all I cared was to keep ahead of Olga Sharapoff, but that was impossible, for the trap was gaining on me rapidly. Giving up the struggle, I slackened my pace, hoping that

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if I held my face to the left she would not recognize me. But that too was a groundless hope, for the next minute the trap was abreast of me, and I heard Miss Sharapoff laugh as she called out, "You are bissy cycling early, Mees Tremayne." I looked up, and she waved her hand to me as they whirled past.

"I wonder how much she has paid that sober-looking farmer to drive his horse at such a reckless pace?" was my first thought, and the next, "Well, she has beaten me. I might have known that she would. The only comfort is I shall probably never see her again."

Alas! if I had only known what the future held in store for Olga Sharapoff, I should have speeded her departure with a kinder thought.

## CHAPTER XII

### VARYING MOODS

THINKING that I might just as well walk on into the town and get my bicycle mended, I kept on, but at a slower pace. My face was beginning to feel less unpleasantly hot, and my heart to beat more normally, when I heard a gay voice call from a passing vehicle, "Ah, Mees Tremayne, what is ze matter? Is your ma-sheen brok?"

I looked up, and there were two of the men I knew at Seadown House. They stopped the horse, and I told them my tyre was punctured, and I was taking it to the shop to be mended.

"We have been to tak Brietsen to ze stashun. He went very early to say good-bye to one friend."

"Did you see Miss Sharapoff?" I asked eagerly.

They both burst out laughing. "Yes; we see her. She is what you say one madwoman."

"Then she did not catch the train?" I gasped.

"No; she was too late," and they again broke into a hearty peal of laughter.

"What is she going to do?"

"She is walking up and down ze stashun waiting for ze next train, and she zay she will find him. But I tink London is one big plas. We must write and tell Karl ze fun." And again those bearded men laughed like a couple of boys. I laughed too, for the feeling of relief was great. I had no fear of Miss Sharapoff finding Karl

Brietsen in London, for he would have several hours the start of her.

"Will you not go to ze stashun and talk wid her while your ma-sheen is mending?" one of them asked with twinkling eyes. I shook my head and smiled as they drove on.

No; I had no wish to gloat over Olga Sharapoff's defeat. Poor girl! I could afford to pity her now, for her disappointment must be terrible. For although I knew that when she came to Seadown House first her inquisitiveness about Karl Brietsen's work, and her offers to place funds at his disposal, arose only from her woman's curiosity and love of meddling and a desire to be mixed up with anything that seemed mysterious, and not from any genuine sympathy with the cause which he upheld; yet later another motive had actuated her. And when she was still repulsed and her offers of help put on one side with playful raillery, then only had grown up and developed that malicious anger which had led her to pit herself against Karl Brietsen and to try to spoil his plans. But that was her secret, and I have no right to betray it.

Poor Olga Sharapoff! I could almost weep as I write, when I think of that young life seemingly so futile and ended so untimely. News came to us the following autumn that she had been found dead in a wood near Paris, but whether she had been shot by a revolutionist as a spy, or by a Russian spy as a revolutionist, was not known, for she was looked at as a dangerous ally by both sides.

Life at Seadown House after the departure of Karl Brietsen and Olga Sharapoff seemed dull and depressing. Mrs. Kovalevsky had another attack of heart complaint, and kept to her room. Mr. Kovalevsky was also shut up most of the time in his own rooms, coming down only to his meals at odd hours, and then appearing terribly depressed. I had long since learnt to dread those strangely uncomfortable moods of his when he seemed to weigh his past life in a balance and to find it

wanting. At such times his remorse and humility were painful to witness. Then again his moods seemed to communicate themselves to everybody in the house. If Mr. Kovalevsky was in one of his normal moods then everybody in the house was gay and happy. At such times it was a pleasure only to see them, for there is something very exhilarating in the gaiety of a Russian. He laughs so easily and so heartily, and his gaiety is so spontaneous, it seems to literally bubble out of him. In my estimation the Russians are by nature more gay, more easily moved to mirth than are English people. I think the reason perhaps is that the standard of living with the majority of Russians is not so luxurious as with us, and so being able to do with less creature comforts, life is not so strenuous, and therefore not taken so seriously. I found them also extremely sympathetic and kind-hearted, and so when Mr. Kovalevsky was in one of his, to me, abnormal moods, then were all the members of his household under a cloud.

I often wondered at such times what was the secret of those lowering fits of depression. Were they due to physical or mental causes? I wondered, too, if his exile was a source of grief to him. But I knew nothing of his feelings on such matters, and I dared not question him. Perhaps I should not have known him any better if I had, for we often reveal ourselves more truly unconsciously than consciously.

I had many times had occasion to witness how easily and without the slightest effort he charmed people, not only by his courtly gracious manners and winning smile, but by his startling frankness in denouncing everyone, himself among others, who was making use of things he did not produce. I sometimes had a suspicion that this frank confession was to him something in the nature of an absolution, and yet it was all very charming. No wonder he was able to warm into enthusiasm even stolid Englishmen, and bring to the surface much latent idealism.

I was thinking something of this as I sat in the kitchen



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one morning peeling some potatoes for Katrina, and occasionally stealing glances at Mr. Kovalevsky's troubled face as he drank his cocoa and read some correspondence. I wondered if he was quite conscious of the influence he wielded over people, and how necessary it was for their well being that his example should be ever on the right side. Was this too much to ask of him? He had at times seemed so great, so noble, so self-sacrificing, so capable of inspiring people with an enthusiasm which should enable them to cast aside their selfishness and materialism, that he seemed born to be a leader of men. Why had he failed to be such? What quality was lacking which made him just stop short of this?

"You look very deep in thought, Miss Tremayne. It is not often that a woman can sit so long without speaking."

I blushed and felt confused, but managed to say, "Are you feeling better to-day, Mr. Kovalevsky?"

"Oh, I am not ill, that is, not physically. It would be better for me if it were so, for when my body is weak then my spirit is strongest. At such times I have the most beautiful thoughts: I see the ideal clearly, and my mind soars as if on wings. Do you not find that as your body weakens your spirit or soul grows stronger?"

"No, quite the contrary. When my body is ill and weak I find that my thoughts are often morbid and unhealthy. But then I am a very prosaic practical person, to whom visions and high ideals seldom come."

"Well, at any rate you are honest, and do not assume to be what you are not. So many women seem to claim that because they are popularly supposed to be more spiritually minded than men, that therefore they must be so, but I have generally found them to be quite the contrary. Many of them have a sort of sentimental religiosity, but real religion, the religion that calls for sacrifice, is not often to be found among women. The majority of them will sell their soul for a frilled petticoat or a bangle, and never know that it is gone."

Before I could think of a suitable reply he had risen and left the room, and I had no more conversation with him for many days.

Then the atmosphere of the house changed. Word came that a Russian peasant who had suffered years of imprisonment and punishment for refusing military service had escaped from Siberia, and after walking two thousand miles, had by the generosity of a great Russian writer been able to come to England, and was now on his way to Seadown House. In fact, he arrived the same day as the letter which told the news.

All was excitement and vivacity. Mr. and Mrs. Kovalevsky joined us at meals, and long conversations were held with the escaped peasant. I liked much his pleasant open countenance, on which no bitterness was visible. Nay, rather he seemed almost unable to express the joy he felt at being a free man in a free country, and when I met him in the garden or grounds he would point to the scenery round about and say exultantly—"Auchen chorashaw, auchen chorashaw," which I understood meant "very good" or "very beautiful." I liked to hear him singing as he worked in the garden. It sounded a little like an Indian incantation, I thought. I learnt from Mrs. Kovalevsky that he was a man of strong faith, untroubled by any doubts. Nay, he firmly believed that it was his faith in God which had preserved his life. For he had passed through all kinds of dangers and terrible hardships, had lived for days among cruel savage people who robbed and murdered strangers as they passed through the woods; he had even overheard them plan to murder him as he passed through a certain wood, and had risen early and gone by a different route. Was not God watching over him that he should thus escape? Ah, yes, God was his Father, and He was watching over His child, and would always do so as long as he put his trust in Him.

It was beautiful to meet such a faith, and it grieved me to hear that questions were being put that might have the effect of weakening it. When doubt comes

naturally quite unsought and will not be driven away, then is the thing inevitable, and it is useless to tell that soul it is a sin to doubt. Doubting Castle once entered all its dungeons must be traversed before the poor pilgrim can again find his way to the light.

But in the case of this Russian peasant he had no doubts, and it seemed cruel to sow any in that credulous, trusting mind. True he had with the zealous earnestness which characterizes that type of disciple considered it his duty to convert all who were "outside the fold," and this was too much for some of them to stand. In his zeal and gratitude for what his Master had done for him, he would have carried them all into "the fold": by main force if that were possible. He even tried to cross swords with those keen intellects, who, trained in every feint and parry of argument, broke his poor wooden sword at the first round and mischievously pricked him on every side. The contest was too fearfully unequal, and I was glad when he went away to Canada. Perhaps there, in company once more with many of the simple peasantry of his own country, and again in touch with Nature on a large scale, his short visit in Doubting Castle would be forgotten, the healed scratches would cease to prick, and he would be again the serene, cheerful, hymn-singing peasant I had first seen.

It was about a month after Karl Brietsen left, in the latter part of April, that I was startled one morning on going into Mr. Kovalevsky's room for the letters to see a young Englishman sitting there, and to hear Mr. Kovalevsky dictating a letter to him. He stopped at my entrance, and said with a pleasant smile—

"Ah, good morning. Let me introduce you to Mr. Phillips, who has come to help me. I have found the work altogether too much for me since Brietsen left. Phillips will take over a part of his duties, and will also relieve you of your secretarial work, as I know how anxious you are to go to the Colony."

Then turning to Mr. Phillips without waiting for a

reply he continued, " Miss Tremayne came here for her health, and kindly stayed on to help me. She has met the people over at Strangeways Colony, and she is so impressed with the life there that she desires to join them. I feel sure that she will be greatly helped and benefited. The thought of a colony life has often been a great inspiration to me, and if I had not other work and other ties nothing would give me greater joy than to join some community such as is described in Tolstoy's *Work while ye have the Light*. I feel convinced that the agricultural life is the only sane, rational and natural life for us all, and I am sure Miss Tremayne is most fortunate in thus early being able to follow her ideals. Do you not agree with me ? "

" Yes, yes, certainly," assented Mr. Phillips. " I have often thought that I should like to live on a colony myself, but in some country where the climate is more favourable. I shall never try an agricultural life in England, the precariousness of the crops would be too disappointing for me."

" Ah, I am afraid your desires are not very strong, Phillips, or you would not be deterred by such small difficulties."

Phillips laughed rather deprecatingly I thought, and then Mr. Kovalevsky went on to speak of a community of people in Russia who lived as did the Early Christians, where they had everything in common, and each person worked for the good of all. The picture he drew of those people was so fascinating, so stimulating, that by the time he had finished my heart was beating high with hope and the eager desire to try such a life for myself. So much was I carried away by the feeling he infused into his words, that I thanked him warmly for making it possible for me to leave Seadown House that day.

The feeling of consternation which had seized me when I saw Mr. Phillips and knew that my services were no longer needed was quite forgotten. It was only when I returned to my room and set to work to pack

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up my belongings that I had a dim suspicion that I had been as good as dismissed. But novelty is always alluring to youth, and as soon as dinner was over I was quite ready to set forth.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AT THE COLONY

ONCE again I was to start a new life, but not altogether among new people, for I knew something of most of the colonists. I had been two or three times to the meetings held on Saturday afternoons at Mr. Wallace Glacier's house, and had met several of them at the Tennyson Hall meetings, but they did not come often, as the journey was too great.

When I arrived at the Colony I found Jessie Newman putting sticks by the sides of some early peas in her garden.

"Ah, here you are," she called out cheerily. "Who have you brought with you?"

"Nobody, I have come by myself, as I have come to stay if you will have me."

"No," she said incredulously.

I nodded.

"Do you really mean it? Well, I am glad. We've been awfully quiet lately. It's not time for our visitors yet, but they'll come in shoals as soon as the weather gets warmer. But say, why have you left Seadown House?"

I told her all about it as I helped her to "stick" peas.

"Do you know Mr. Phillips?" I asked.

She laughed. "Yes, I've met him once or twice. I think he'll get on all right with the Barin (Mr. Kovalevsky). It would be impossible to quarrel with Phillips, for you know very well that he is going to agree with you before you speak."

"That can't be said of you," I replied laughing.

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"Thank goodness, no. Amiability is not my strong point."

"It's a very nice quality, though."

"A bit cloying if you get too much of it. However, you won't find very many of that sort on the Colony, I'm afraid, we're too cranky for that. But come along, these others are dwarf peas and don't require sticking."

As we entered the door of Jessie Newman's cottage, I looked around eagerly at what was to be my future home. It was an ordinary four-roomed cottage, the walls being partly of brick and partly of weather boarding. I thought I had never seen such small low rooms. It was not ceiled overhead, and the beams and flooring were almost black with smoke. The kitchen floor was made of bricks, much worn and broken. Not a single door or window fitted, and in cold or windy weather the draughts were terrible. But I did not discover these drawbacks until later. I was too much taken up with the novelty of it all to be very critical. For the first time in my life I was going to live in a genuine cottage, and the thought delighted me.

When I learnt that there were three other women sharing Jessie Newman's cottage, I began to fear that there could be no room for me; but she quickly decided that I should have a "shake down" in the sitting-room, and also that I should take my full share in the housework. My offer of payment of a small sum a week until I could "grow" my keep was refused. There were plenty of vegetables, she declared, and some corn of their own growing, but if I liked to buy such things as butter or groceries to make the fare more palatable, I was at liberty to do so.

"But you had better make up your mind from the start to do without a lot of things you have been accustomed to, or you'll never be able to live here," she finished up laughingly.

With the easy confidence of youth and inexperience I assured her that I was quite prepared to endure any and all hardships which might fall to my lot.

"That's the only spirit to come here with. And now we'll get some tea, then I'll take you around to see Alice."

"Alice! Who is she?"

"Alice Goodwin. I thought you knew her?"

"Oh, yes, I remember her name now, I saw her once at Tennyson Hall. She explained to me something I could not understand about Mr. Kovalevsky."

"My dear girl, if you think you are going to understand all about our Russian Barin you are letting yourself in for a big job."

"Oh, I don't expect to ever understand him thoroughly, for between you and me, I doubt if he always understands himself."

"As to that, I don't think any of us understand ourselves. You see, our motives are all so terribly mixed, and the one we give to other people is not always the one which really actuates our conduct."

"Talking of motives, I wonder what was the real motive which made me come here. I doubt if I could tell. Perhaps you can find out for me."

She looked at me and laughed heartily. "I did well to name you Belinda the Backward. But never mind about your motives, sufficient that you are interested in our work, and to a large extent in sympathy with our aims to live a simple, useful life."

"Yes, that is quite true. But now will you tell me something about the rules of the Colony?"

"Rules! we don't believe in laying down rules for anybody. Each one must follow his or her own conscience."

"But about the land, who does it belong to? The one you call 'the Boss'?"

"Fred Firman? No, he doesn't own the land. The ground is free to whoever wants to work it. There is a plot for you if you like."

"Thank you, but I don't understand yet. Who bought the land in the first place? Whose name was used in the deeds of transfer? for there must be a responsible owner."



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"Oh, I see what you mean. Well, Fred Firman was the man who transacted the business, but the money to buy the land was found by four of the original colonists. Fred Firman isn't the boss any more than any other member. That is one of Billy's labels, and as usual it sticks, for Fred is a bit inclined to lay down the law when he comes."

"Then he isn't here always?"

"Oh, no, he only comes here occasionally for week ends; he has a business at Southampton. He would like to come here very much, and he says as soon as he can dispose of his business without loss, he shall throw in his lot with us. But I doubt it."

"Why?"

"I think he is more likely to start a colony of his own, and work it on his own lines."

"And be really the boss, I suppose. He looks like a man who would find a difficulty in keeping his temper under control if he were thwarted. And yet on certain sides of his nature I should say he is easily influenced."

"Yes, you are quite right, he is easily influenced, especially by idealistic people, but when he gets back among business men the ideal seems less possible."

"But now to come back to the land, who holds the deeds?"

"There aren't any. We saw that there might be some friction in the future about the ownership, so we agreed to burn them. Now the land is free to whoever wishes to work it."

"And suppose a colonist goes away after cultivating a piece of land for years?"

"He loses all claim, of course. Occupation is the only claim that is recognized among us. An unwritten law which I wish could be made universal. Who has any moral right to the land save the one who works it? In my estimation nobody has any right to anything save that which they can use. Hoarding is a crime."

Feeling that the conversation was getting out of my

depths, I turned it by saying, "You spoke of visitors just now, what kind of visitors do you get?"

She laughed merrily as she replied—

"All sorts. Lots of them come to see us as they would go to see a menagerie, and seem rather surprised and disappointed to find us so much like other people. One woman was overheard to say to another, "Why, they speak quite like ladies." Then again there are those who come with a view to joining us, but after a week or two many of them find the life too hard or too monotonous, and return to the towns. But they generally remain more or less in sympathy with us, and many of them send us parcels of groceries or bundles of clothes when they can afford it. Many visitors like the country in the summer, but only the old original colonists can stand the winter."

"Well, I have had the bigger part of two winters in the country, so I am pretty well seasoned."

She threw back her head and laughed heartily. "Seasoned! in Seadown House, where you have water laid on and big stoves to warm the house, and Katrina to do the cooking? Why, the only firing we usually have is what we gather from the piece of copse near by; and our water is rain water, or we fetch it from a spring a quarter of a mile away."

I had dimly noticed while we had been talking that it had taken a long time for the kettle to boil, and that the smoke was occasionally blown out into the room, but I had been so interested that it had not made much impression on me.

"Wait till we leave you in charge of the dinner, and there is nothing but damp wood to cook it with, then you'll have to hold on to your temper with both hands. But come, tea is ready. We don't usually have anything until supper time, but we will to-day in your honour."

I was anxious to meet the other inmates of the cottage, so Jessie Newman went out and rigged up a flag and shortly after they appeared. The first to arrive was

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Miss McLeod, a woman about forty, wearing gold-rimmed spectacles. As she shook hands with me she gave me a remarkably direct searching look, for we had not met before. Her eyes were a soft bright brown, and her hair of the same colour, abundant and curly. She was plainly dressed in a loose blouse and a short serge cycling skirt. She was wearing no hat. She told us she had been digging up a bed for potatoes.

"It is rather late, isn't it? Audrey put in all the potatoes last month."

"Never mind, I daresay I shall grow a few just to make me feel satisfied that my labour has not been wasted. I must do something while I am here, you see."

She laughed in a delightfully easy fashion, and one could see that she did not let many things trouble her. I learnt later that she was only there for a visit until she could make up her mind what to do and where to settle. She had a small assured income, and was without ties.

Lizzie Brown was a young girl of twenty. Good-looking, rosy-cheeked, and strong, and very good-tempered. I could never find out why she had joined the Colony, except that when two of her friends went she decided to go too. She held no particular views on any subject, and seemed to look at the whole affair as a huge joke. She was, however, unselfish, kind-hearted, and a thorough worker, and when she left later on to be married we missed her terribly.

The third member was Miss Selina Morehen. She was nearer fifty than forty, I should say. A tall, thin, flat-chested woman, with dark, wavy hair turning gray, combed smoothly back from her forehead. Her face was colourless, and her mild blue eyes were rather small. Her teeth were white and regular, but her face was spoilt by her lower lip, which was loose, and had a way of dropping which reminded one of a horse when it stands half-asleep in a field. Her hands I noticed were long and thin and fine, as if unaccustomed to rough work. She had an ecstatic way of speaking, which rather jarred on

me, and as I learnt to know her better, I continually caught myself answering her brusquely and showing myself up in the most unfavourable light, simply, I suspect, as a contrast to her suave goodness. When Jessie Newman introduced me to her, and told her I had come to throw in my lot with them, she turned to me with a beaming smile, and said—

“This is so cheering. It is always so encouraging to enrol the young under our banner of freedom. I was remarking only to-day to William Hill that I thought the light was spreading.”

“And what did Billy say?” asked Jessie Newman, her eyes twinkling with amusement.

Miss Morehen smiled rather deprecatingly, and seemed to hesitate, when Lizzie Brown broke in gleefully—

“He said he was awfully glad to hear it, for they had run short of oil at the Hall of Reason, and if Selina could induce the light to spread as far as that Bareronial mansion he'd be very grateful, for then he might be able to see where most of his clothes had hidden themselves.”

“That's just like Billy,” said Jessie Newman delightedly. “You'll like Billy immensely,” she continued turning to me. “He's one of the kindest-hearted men in the world, and as a consequence is often taken advantage of. It's all true about his clothes too, for if anybody is short of anything they take Billy's.”

“But will he stand that?”

“Oh, yes, he's awfully good-natured. In fact he has but one failing, he's too fond of an argument, and as he hasn't at all a logical mind, although he thinks he has, he introduces all kinds of irrelevant matter into a discussion, and hammers away at side issues which are of no importance, and then, when he is pulled up and set right, he gets touchy and feels dreadfully hurt. You see Billy was once a Hyde Park spouter, where a ready retort does duty for sound argument.”

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"Do you have many discussions?" I asked.

"Not so many as we used to, but we are all spouters more or less. Selina here is a crack speaker, and can always be depended on to open a discussion when we organize a meeting at one of the villages. But come along, let's go over and see Alice. It's Selina's turn to cook the supper to-night, so I'm off duty."

As we were crossing the second field on our way to Alice Goodwin's cottage we were overtaken by some one who had evidently been walking fast. Without appearing to notice me he linked his arm in Jessie Newman's, and said in a very low voice, "Jessie is coming down to-night."

"What? You don't mean it?" returned Jessie Newman in low, horrified tones. And then a whisper, "What are you going to do?"

"Face the music," was the reply, with a short, reckless laugh. "He vows he will kill me."

"Oh, Beresford, do be careful. Don't you think you had better go away before he comes?"

Then, as if remembering me, they drew a little apart and conversed in low, rapid tones. I had been astonished to move before, but now I walked on leaving them to finish their conversation. Shortly after they overtook me, and Jessie Newman introduced her companion as Conrad Beresford. He was of medium height, and strongly built, with a rather Irish type of face, with thickly curling hair and blue eyes. He was loosely dressed in tweed cycling suit. I had seen him several times but had never spoken to him. As soon as we were near Alice Goodwin's cottage he left us, and Jessie Newman began to expatiate on how much more her peas were than Alice's, and to explain rather the reason, I guessed she did not wish me to ask questions about Conrad Beresford. I respected his wish, but all the same I could not help wondering what this mystery which was threatened by such disastrous results.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ASPIRATIONS

THE cottage in which Alice Goodwin and her husband lived was a long, low one-storey building divided into two rooms. I saw at a glance that everything was beautifully neat and clean, and as there was nothing in the room save what was quite necessary, it was not crowded. It looked a cosy little place, and showed that everything had been arranged with an artistic eye.

Alice Goodwin was of medium height, with large and tolerably regular features. Of a naturally colourless complexion, the slight tan that she had acquired gave her a healthy appearance. Her hair was dark and abundant, but arranged very simply. Her eyes were dark blue and large, and had a clear, direct look. Her face was perfectly smooth and unlined, and bespoke a cheerful contented disposition. I might remark here that this seemed the general characteristic of the Colony.

She was wearing a big print pinafore which was gathered into a yoke, and hung in straight folds from the shoulders. I found afterwards that this was the general indoor garment, and as it was simple and easily washed I adopted it myself.

Shortly after we entered the cottage Jessie Newman murmured something about running over to see Maggie, and then, turning to me, with a smile, said—

“You and Alice will have heaps to talk about. I shall be back again long before you are ready to return, I expect.” And so left us.

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I wondered whether her visit had anything to do with the news Conrad Beresford had brought her, but as she had said nothing to Alice Goodwin about it, and I had overheard something which was evidently not intended for my ears, I felt that it would not be quite honourable for me to mention it, or even to ask any questions, and so tried to centre my attention on what Alice Goodwin was saying.

As she showed me over her little cottage, pointing out the ingenious contrivances for storing things, and relating the history of each article of furniture, for they had either been gifts from friends or had been made by her or her husband's hands, I could not help wondering if she were quite satisfied with what was only, spite of the beautiful cleanliness and taste displayed, a tiny cottage meagrely furnished. Feeling sure that she would not be offended, I asked if there were not times when she felt a desire to go back to her old life, for I divined that she had once been accustomed to something much more luxurious.

"Go back!" she echoed. "What is there to go back for? Shops, and dressing up, and afternoon calls? I loathed the whole business long before I left London. It all seemed so senseless and useless. Look at the time wasted in gazing at shop windows, in deciding what styles you will have, and in choosing your materials. Then the fittings at the dressmaker's and the visits to your milliner. If you had only to buy one or two new dresses a year one would not begrudge the time, but if you live in a fashionable suburb, as I did, you need to be constantly replenishing your wardrobe to keep at all up to date. Every time I go home, and see and hear my sisters, I come back here feeling thankful that I am shut off from the treadmill of London fashions."

"Well, then, granted you save a lot of time by living away from shops and fashions, don't you, on the other hand, waste a lot by living in such a primitive style?" I asked. For it had suddenly flashed into my

mind while she was speaking, the length of time it had taken Jessie Newman to boil the kettle that afternoon.

"To a certain extent we do, but it is not a heartless or mischievous waste of time, which I contend following the fashions is. How many girls are on the streets in London now through a desire for finery? A desire which is fostered by the shop windows, and by the sight of the fashionable dresses of their wealthier sisters. Years before I left London I had come to the conclusion that it was the duty of every thoughtful woman, no matter what her station in life, to set an example of simplicity in dress to her more ignorant and vanity-loving sisters. At one time the churches set this example, now if you want to see the most expensive dresses and the latest fashions, go to the popular churches. At one time religion meant sacrifice, now it seems to be stripped of all meaning. If by going back I could organize a crusade against expensive dressing and could influence other women to join it, I would go, but I have not the strength of character or the enthusiasm necessary for such a work. All I can do is to tell the people who visit us every summer what we stand for, and to show them that a life of simplicity need neither be unhappy nor repulsive, and that a tiny cottage can be both clean and artistic."

"You certainly succeed in doing that very effectually," I remarked, feeling more than half ashamed of myself for the comfort-loving weakness which had prompted my first question. And then I added, "You will be interested to hear that there is just such a crusade as you mention being formed at Haslemere, but I can't give you any particulars."

"That is good news. I am thankful that there are others thinking along the same lines. I hope the crusade you mention will embrace simplicity of labour as well, but to do that effectually one must not live in a city. Look at the everlasting round of dusting and cleaning that has every day to be gone through if you



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all other men ; and sacrifice is the very essence of all true society."—LAMENNAIS.

" There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance ; that imitation is suicide ; that he must take himself for better for worse as his portion ; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given him to till."—EMERSON.

" For (over and over again) there is nothing that is evil except because a man has not mastery over it ; and there is no good thing that is not evil if it have mastery over a man. . . . Things cannot be divided into good and evil, but all are good so soon as they are brought into subjection.

" Let the strong desires come and go ; refuse them not, disown them not ; but think not that in them lurks finally the thing you want.

" Presently they will fade away, and into the intolerable light will dissolve like gossamers before the sun."—EDWARD CARPENTER.

" Make thy claim of wages a zero ; then thou hast the world under thy feet. Well did the wisest of our time write, ' It is only with renunciation that life properly speaking can be said to begin.' "—CARLYLE.

" There is no more fatal blunderer than he who consumes the greater part of his life getting his living.

" If there is an experiment which you would like to try, try it. Do not entertain doubts if they are not agreeable to you."—THOREAU.

" Self-development is an aim for all, an aim which will make all stronger, and saner, and wiser, and better. It will make each in the end more helpful to humanity. To be sound in wind and limb ; to be healthy of body

and mind ; to be educated, to be emancipated, *to be free*, to be beautiful—these things are ends towards which all should strain, and by attaining which all are happier in themselves, and more useful to others.”—GRANT ALLEN.

“ No man can do what is unjust without suffering for it. What then is a man’s nature ? To bite, to kick, and to throw into prison and to behead ? No ; but to do good, to co-operate with others, to wish them well.

“ You must exercise the will, and the thing is done, it is set right ; as on the other hand, only be careless, and the thing is lost ; for from within comes ruin, and from within comes help.”—EPICTETUS.

“ But indeed conviction, were it never so excellent, is worthless till it convert itself into conduct.

“ Be no longer a chaos, but a world, or even world-kin. Produce, produce ! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a product, produce it, in God’s name ! ’Tis the utmost thou hast in thee, out with it, then. Up, up ! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh, wherein no man can work.”—CARLYLE.

“ What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ? ”—THE PROPHET MICAH.

I was busy reading these extracts when Jessie Newman returned. Mr. Goodwin had gone into the shed at the back of the house to wash, and his wife was busy getting his supper. Suddenly turning from the window to make some remark I found myself alone, but I could hear a kind of suppressed whispering in the next room. As the bedroom was only divided from the living-room by a very thin wooden partition, it was not the slightest

## CHAPTER XV

### MISGIVINGS

THE others were seated at supper when we got back. Miss Morehen and Miss McLeod were deep in a discussion on some theosophical work, which the latter had on the table at her side, and had evidently been reading some extracts from. Lizzie Brown was looking rather bored, but brightened up at our entrance, and began telling me with much amusement how Andrey Ivanoff had been there with my trunk, and the efforts she had made to understand his English. This led to her telling me many laughable stories about the mispronunciation of the Russian and Polish names. The names of two Polish gentlemen both ending in "ski" the villagers had found quite unpronounceable, and to distinguish one from the other they had dubbed them "Mr. Whisky and Mr. Irish Whisky."

All through supper Jessie Newman scarcely spoke a word, but the other three were so busy talking that nobody seemed to notice her silence save myself.

As soon as the supper things had been washed Lizzie Brown, with much laughter, everything seeming a subject of mirth to her, declared that we must now see about my bed. There was not a great deal to be done, however; a mattress from one of the other beds, a cushion for a pillow, a blanket and a pair of sheets exhausted the stores of the cottage. Luckily, as it had been winter when I first came to Seadown House, I had brought a thick travelling rug with me; this now served for a quilt.

Accommodation for my clothes promised to be a more difficult matter, and after unpacking and putting on one side the things I should immediately need, I saw nothing for it but to return all the others to my trunk again. Lizzie Brown promised to get some nails to hang my dresses behind the door next day, at the same time assuring me that everybody lived in their trunks, as nobody had either a wardrobe or a dress-cupboard.

As soon as my arrangements were completed we all retired, late hours being considered luxuries not to be indulged in as they entailed the burning of oil. The others undressed in the dark, but I being a stranger, was allowed the kitchen lamp, but even this, Lizzie Brown assured me with a laugh, I must be sparing of. This being the case I undressed as quickly as possible, blowing out the lamp and placing the matches within reach.

Whether it was the strangeness of sleeping on the floor, or the continued rattling of the window, or the newness of my present mode of life which robbed me of my sleep, I cannot say. But though thoroughly tired I could not get a wink. Misgivings which had not entered my mind through the day now weighed me down. Had I been wise in coming here? Was I brave enough to put up with the hardships which I saw I should have to endure?

I had never in my life been accustomed to what I considered luxuries, but of comforts I had not known any lack. Even at Seadown House, where there was a good deal of rough simplicity, I had not felt any real discomfort. To never sit on anything softer than a Windsor chair, nor to walk on anything more yielding than linoleum, and even to have to dress with no glass save my hand glass, were such trifles that I had scarcely noticed them. And though the food was vegetarian, it was always varied, well cooked, and abundant. But now as I lay and shivered under my scanty bed-clothes, and thought of the hard heavy bread we had

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my trunk and recklessly strewing the floor with its contents, I took from the bottom my dressing-gown and put it on. I also laid my golf cape and my thickest dress across the bed, telling myself as I blew out the lamp and got back into bed again that if I could not sleep I would at least be warm.

Shortly after I felt not only warm but deliciously sleepy, and I remembered nothing further until I woke to find the sun shining on my window.

All my last night's fears were forgotten, and I slid out of bed with the exultant thought that everything was new and untried, and therefore delightful. The fact that there was no water in my room, and that I should have to wash in the tin basin standing on a bench outside the back door, only made me smile as I remembered Lizzie Brown's mischievous chuckle as she pointed out this contrivance to me.

After I had dressed and washed, I set about lighting the fire, as the others were not yet stirring. By the time I had coaxed the wood into burning and got the kettle to sing my patience was pretty nearly exhausted, so I decided to go outside and recuperate.

The morning was lovely, and the air though cold was crisp and invigorating. As I walked along a path in the opposite direction to Alice Goodwin's cottage I soon came out into a fairly well made road, and in turning a corner I saw coming along at a swinging stride Frank Mordaunt.

"The hut-and-nut man," I said to myself. I had liked his frank boyish face from the first, and though we had never spoken to each other, and he was evidently absorbed in his own thoughts, I stopped in front of him, and holding out my hand said impulsively:

"I am 'Belinda the Backward,' and you are the 'hut-and-nut man.'"

He threw back his head with a hearty guffaw, and after shaking my hand folded his arms, and throwing one foot forward seemed waiting for me to explain myself further.

"I came here yesterday and I am going to live on the Colony," I said lightly. And then correcting myself I added more slowly, "For a time at least."

For somehow as I looked at him, at the shabby carelessness of his dress, at the thick unbrushed hair, and the heavy boots innocent of blacking, some of my last night's misgivings returned. These were mere trifles, I knew, and yet my town-bred eyes were offended at them. Surely one could be neat in appearance without spending much money on one's dress.

"That sounds as if you don't mean to stay long," he answered. "But you mustn't give up at the start. Things will be much pleasanter in the summer."

"Yes, I daresay, but I haven't made up my mind about things yet. I'm afraid I've got a lot to learn. The fact is I take up an idea without looking all round it. I see only the point of view of the person who places an idea before me, that is if it is reasonably put. So you see I am always at the mercy of the most convincing speaker."

"And whose influence are you suffering from this morning that has made you so uncertain about staying here?"

"I am afraid it is Belinda 'herself,'" I replied with a laugh. "Or," looking down at his boots, "maybe it's your boots that are responsible."

He looked down at them thoroughly puzzled. "They aren't very clean, but what have they to do with your going or staying on the Colony?"

"Not exactly the boots themselves perhaps, but what they symbolize. Is it positively necessary that because a man hates the badges of civilization, the conventional silk hat, frock coat, and starched shirt, that he should go to the other extreme?"

He flushed slightly. "I'm not going to justify myself, but there are so many things of more importance to think about, that I forget a lot of little details. But surely you wouldn't weigh an unblackened boot against a principle!"

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"I'm not going to be drawn into an argument before breakfast," I retorted. "Besides I haven't any principles, only prejudices, and just now I am terribly prejudiced in favour of breakfast Good-bye," and I turned away laughing, leaving him standing in the middle of the road.

I had not gone many yards before he was at my side saying contritely, "I should be awfully sorry, Miss Tremayne, if any failing of mine has prejudiced you against the Colony." And then his natural sense of justice seemingly getting the better of him he added quickly, "But do you think it is quite fair to judge all the others by me?"

"No, I don't," I answered promptly; "and I think I was abominably rude to you, and I am quite ashamed of myself."

"Oh, please don't," he replied blushing hotly. "I wasn't thinking of it in that light at all, for I often get laughed at for my carelessness. It was for your sake that I was sorry."

I was struck by the generosity of this reply, and vexed with myself for the petty carping criticism which had called it forth, and I wondered if I should ever be able to cultivate such a large, generous nature. This led me to say—

"I have learnt one lesson since I came here, and that is that I am lacking in some kind of philosophy which the colonists I have met possess. What is it which enables you to be indifferent to all kinds of discomfort? Is it that your minds are so filled with other things that you eat unappetizing food without tasting it, and endure cold without feeling it?"

"I am afraid your conclusions are not very reliable, Miss Tremayne," he answered with a smile. "In the first place I think you underrate yourself, and in the second I *know* you overrate us, for I often feel that we dwell altogether too much on our personal needs. My own opinion is that it is only when we are able to forget ourselves in trying to help others, that we

become indifferent to petty discomforts. Have you read *Marcus Aurelius*? If not, perhaps you will be interested in an extract I copied out the other day."

Taking from his pocket a small book evidently made by himself from some folded note paper, he turned towards the end of some closely written pages and read in a slightly embarrassed voice, "Remember, then, henceforth in every case when you are tempted to repine, to apply this principle—not 'the thing is a misfortune' but 'to bear it bravely is good fortune.'"

"Thank you, Mr. Mordaunt, you have given me my piece of philosophy." And shaking hands we parted without another word.



## CHAPTER XVI

### PEOPLE AND POETRY

AFTER breakfast Miss Morehen offered to show me over the Colony, and as I was very anxious to see the other members, I gladly accepted her offer. I learnt on the way that there were ten men on the Colony at the present time, and six women (not including myself). There were two or three women who were sympathizers who lived in the nearest village, but they were not members of the Colony.

The house where most of the single men lived, and where all new comers, if they were men, were put up, was originally the farm house. This was a plain unpretentious building and did not look at all inviting to my feminine eyes. The windows were bare of blinds, and not very clean. The doors were never locked, Miss Morehen told me, and as the men would all be out at this time of day we were free to enter.

There were eight rooms in the house, and every room seemed a general living and sleeping room with the exception of the kitchen, which was kept to work and eat in only. In the summer when visitors were over plentiful they rigged up a tent and slept out. The furniture was of the roughest and rudest description, but it looked strong and no doubt served its purpose. As I saw how the tables and chairs and even the floors were strewn with a miscellaneous assortment of things, I did not much wonder that Billy could not find his clothes, the only wonder was how they ever found anything.

"Why don't they clean up the place and make it look tidy? I don't know how they can live in such a muddle," I said to Miss Morehen as we came away.

"Oh, it isn't always as bad as this. Sometimes they get a man in who is domesticated and starts to work to give the place a good over-hauling. But you know what men are; they think a good clean-up ought to last six months. At first some of the women used to come and tidy up the place, but we soon gave it up in despair."

Just then we came to a group of five men who were digging out the foundations for a new cottage. They all looked up at Miss Morehen's greeting, and after introducing me as a new member, she told them that I was not much impressed with the communal home.

"What's wrong with it?" asked a tall dark-bearded man, who looked like a foreigner, but as soon as he spoke I knew that he was an Englishman. "We didn't come here to spend all our time doing housework."

"It's just like this, Miss Tremayne," said Billy the Porter, ignoring this last remark and turning a portentously grave face towards me, but not before I had seen the wink he bestowed on the others, "we are just about to begin our spring cleaning. All the lace curtains and the Axminster carpets, and the antimetcatchers have been sent away to be cleaned, but you wait a week or two and then come to afternoon tea with us and we'll astonish you. The latest thing in cakes *à la* Billy Hill, and the bread and butter cut and rolled so as not to spoil your lavender kids, by the philosopher, the Honourable Archibald Hunter. Mordaunt will bring in the tea if he doesn't fall over his feet on the way; Saint Ignatius here, who doesn't believe in doing housework, will show you how to clear all the wittles off the table without the use of a tray."

There was a general laugh at this wind-up, although I thought the dark-whiskered man alluded to as Saint Ignatius didn't look altogether pleased. The philosopher I found to be the pale, dark, bespectacled young

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man I had seen the first time I was at Wallace Glacier's. The fifth member of the group I had not met before. If I had seen him anywhere else I should not have given him a second glance, for he looked altogether conventional. Dressed in an ordinary dark tweed suit, shining at the elbows and pockets and baggy at the knees, with a linen collar and black necktie, if he had been wearing a bowler hat he might have passed anywhere else as a badly-paid clerk, but with a gray cloth cap on his head and here on the Colony, I was at a loss how to place him. He was not working and so far had not spoken, but when the others returned to their work he stepped to Miss Morehen's side, and began talking in a rather thick tone, as though he had something the matter with his throat.

Miss Morehen introduced him to me as a sympathizer who often came to the Colony when he wanted a few days' change of air. And then she went on in her high-flown, ecstatic manner—

"Mr. Cecil Harvey is really one of us, although he has not yet seen his way to leave his present berth and come and live with us entirely. But it may be that he is of those who can be in the world and yet not of it. He is doing a splendid work with his pen, and he is not only a thinker but a poet, and we are proud of him."

It was not in human nature, especially the nature of a young man, not to be flattered at Miss Morehen's eulogy, but as I glanced at him I felt that he did not attach too great importance to her remarks, for he immediately turned the conversation into a less personal channel.

A little later we came in sight of another group of men who were turning up some soil. As we drew nearer, I heard a sonorous voice declaiming with a good deal of feeling and elocutionary skill those lines of Shelley's—

Away, away, from men and towns,  
To the wild wood and the downs—

To the silent wilderness  
Where the soul need not repress  
Its music, lest it should not find  
An echo in another's mind,  
While the touch of nature's art  
Harmonizes heart to heart.

"There's Le Breton astride of Pegasus," remarked Mr. Cecil Harvey with a smile.

"Le Breton! I had not heard the name before. "Is he one of the colonists?" I asked.

"No, he is a friend of mine, a journalist. We had a day off, so we came here to spend it. Victor is a great book-lover and chock full of poetry. He could keep on for a whole day like this, I think."

"More than chock full, running over," I thought, as I heard him saying: "Just listen to this, did you ever hear anything finer?"—

"The pale, the cold, and the moony smile  
Which the meteor-beam of a starless night  
Sheds on a lonely and sea-girt isle,  
Ere the dawning of morn's undoubted light,  
Is the flame of life so fickle and wan  
That flits round our steps till their strength is gone.

"O man! hold thee on in courage of soul  
Through the stormy shades of thy worldly way,  
And the billows of cloud that around thee roll  
Shall sleep in the light of a wondrous day,  
Where hell and heaven shall leave thee free  
To the universe of destiny."

"Does he always hold forth like this when he comes here?" I whispered to Miss Morehen, who seemed to be listening with rapt attention. She gave me rather a reproving look, but otherwise deigned me no answer. We were by this time quite close to the group, and very picturesque I thought they looked. Sydney Goodwin, clothed only in knickerbockers and a vest, his long hair blowing about his shoulders as he worked, was bending over a bed in which he was sowing some seeds. With his dark, grave, unemotional face, he made me think of Fennimore Cooper's noble red-man or of Longfellow's

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audience, and I doubt if he was interested personally in a single one of the men there.

Under cover of the poetry which had commenced again, I stepped up to Mr. Cecil Harvey and said—

“Your friend makes me think of that line of Browning’s in the ‘Grammarians’ Funeral’: ‘This man decided not to live but to know.’”

“Oh, Victor is quite alive,” he replied with a smile, “but he is awfully bitten with literature. At present he is gorging himself on poetry. And after all, that is a very good stock-in-trade for a journalist, don’t you think?”

“Very likely, although I should think that a knowledge and understanding of people was even more necessary. Do you know, I think he ought to be a member of the Colony, for he is a distinct type.”

“That may be, but that isn’t the only qualification necessary for a colonist. You want agriculturists here, and Le Breton hates any tool but a pen, or a hammer to put up fresh bookshelves.”

Just then Miss Morehen came to me and whispered that we had better be going, as she wanted to take me to the village to see Mrs. Percival.

“But isn’t it rather an awkward time to receive visitors just before dinner?” I asked as we walked away from the group.

“Oh, it will be all right. Matiushka never minds anyone dropping in. She is never ashamed to be seen in her work.”

“Matiushka” was Russian for “little mother,” she told me, and they had named her that because she always mothered every one when she came to the colony.

“She is one of the sympathizers you mentioned this morning, I suppose?”

“Yes, she has taken rooms here for a few weeks. She has been very ill, a sort of nervous breakdown, and the doctor ordered her away for a complete change and rest. So she came here.”

might even abuse it But these men and women who have all come from good and, in some cases, luxurious homes, who never knew what lack of food or even poor food meant until they came here, who yet are willing to bear all hardships because they believe they are doing right, surely they may be trusted to act rightly, one towards another. Ah, no, I have no fear for them."

I thought of these words a week later, when I saw her come into our cottage, her face drawn and haggard and the skin roughened like that of a child's when it is suddenly exposed to a blast of cold wind, her usually soft brown eyes hard and staring.

"Only some awful fear or terrible calamity could bring such a look as that into a woman's face," I thought, as she sank without a word of greeting into the chair I had placed for her.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT

"WHY, little mother, whatever has happened?" asked Jessie Newman in a kind, almost caressing voice. And yet even as she spoke I felt sure that she knew what was the matter. Mrs. Percival must have felt so, too, for fixing her burning eyes on Jessie, she burst out almost roughly, "Why do you ask that when you know already. You have known it for weeks, and yet have never hinted a word to me."

"But what was the use of telling you, dear little mother? It would only have upset you and undone all the good the pure air and rest was doing for you. Besides, you could have done no good, the thing was inevitable. But, come now, tell me what you have heard? I daresay the villagers have made the story a great deal worse than it is. Why, they think we must be lunatics simply because we go without shoes and stockings in the hot weather, and don't wear hats except when it is raining, and not always then."

"Do you think I would listen to mere village gossip!" was the scornful reply. "No, it came from nearer home. Lizzie Brown's mother told me this morning, and she is almost as upset as I am."

"Oh, well, you know Mrs. Brown has never got further than the church service, 'As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen,' and that is the end of everything for her. But you, Matiushka, surely you are more advanced than that! Would you have a

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woman stay with her husband, when the only tie which makes marriage sacred, love, is broken ? ”

The brown eyes wavered and dropped, and seeing this Jessie Newman pushed on. “ Surely you do not think it is a crime for a woman to leave a husband she has ceased to love or respect ? We have known for long enough that the relations between Maggie and Donoghue were strained to breaking point, and that the snap was bound to come at last. Apart they may each be happy, together they were bound to be miserable. Then why would you condemn them to a life of misery for the sake of a mere conventional custom ? ”

Mrs. Percival lifted her head as suddenly as if she had received a galvanic shock, and her face assumed a more life-like hue as she said passionately—

“ Do you think it is their separation that I am condemning ? Do you think it is that which has withered all my hopes and shattered my dreams ? No, if that had been all, I should have thought it pitiful, but nothing more. It is the fact that she has only separated from one husband to take on with another that is so awful in my eyes. Could the most thoughtlessly selfish woman on earth have acted with less consideration for the feelings of her husband and of others ? Where does the sacredness of the marriage tie come in, may I ask, and which marriage is to be considered sacred ? Oh, I tell you, I see in this license of freedom the beginning of the end, the break up of the Colony, and the death of all my hopes.”

“ No, no, little mother, you are exciting yourself over a bogey of your own imagination. The thing is over and done with now. Donoghue has gone back to Ireland, and Beresford and Maggie will be leaving us shortly, and then the Colony will go on just as before.”

“ Never,” was the despairing reply. “ It has fallen from its high estate, the serpent has crept into my garden of Eden, and it can never be the same again. Instead of being a people with a high purpose, to be admired for your courage and endurance, an inspiration



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to people of weaker wills, and like a city set on a hill to us who are still bound by family ties to remain in the bondage of Egypt, instead of being all this, you will now be a stumbling block to the weak and wavering, and a byeword to those who have suspected your motives from the beginning."

I noticed at this stage that Jessie Newman was beginning to grow impatient. Hitherto she had been speaking in the patient soothing tones that one would use towards a sorrowing but protesting child, but now dropping this tone she said indignantly—

"Oh, I say, this is going a bit too far. If you have set us upon a pinnacle, whose fault is that? We have never set ourselves up to be anything but reasonable, rational men and women, with a desire to 'do to others as we would that they should do to us,' and I do not think we have failed in this aspiration now more than heretofore. As for Maggie and Beresford, who has set us in authority over them, and what right have we to constitute ourselves judges of their conduct? We came here to be free, and surely you would not have us deny to them the freedom which we claim for ourselves?"

Mrs. Percival was silent, and as Jessie Newman's glance rested on her white, strained face, her own relaxed, and in her usual good-humoured tones she resumed—

"After all, little mother, I daresay if we could get at the root of all your trouble, it is your respectable British matronly prejudices which are offended. Suppose Maggie and Donoghue had been Americans and had been married according to the American law, and then had obtained a divorce for incompatibility of temperament, and one or both had got married again, would you have been shocked, and have thought they had broken any law legal or moral?"

"Legal! moral! don't use the words," was the sharp reply. "Maggie's first marriage was not legal, but it was moral, but this one—what can you call this?"

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When Maggie and Donoghue decided to have a free union and announced it as such, I was sorry, for when a law is not distinctly bad I myself prefer to keep it, but I never condemned them for thinking otherwise, for knowing that they did not believe in a government which was founded and is maintained by the use of violence, I thought them consistent when they refused to call in its aid to sanction their union, but I understood it was to be a life marriage. But now their only justification is withdrawn, for instead of proving themselves worthy of freedom and above the need of the law, they have shown themselves to be very much beneath it."

Jessie Newman was silent for a second or two, and I could see she was putting a strong curb on herself. When she spoke again her tones were lower and graver. "Don't you think we are allowing our feelings too much liberty in this discussion, Matiushka? I am as sorry as you can be at this split between Maggie and Donoghue, in fact it has been a matter of grief to most of us, for it is a breaking down of that love which we hoped was the keynote of the Colony; but though we may deplore their action, we must not condemn them, for who among us is so perfect that we dare throw stones?"

I saw that Mrs. Percival was too exhausted to reply, and having during all this time been a silent listener, I felt that I might now speak.

"I understand from this conversation that the marriage of Maggie and Donoghue was a non-legal one. I may not agree with that position, in fact, I distinctly disagree with it, but that is of no importance. What I want to say is, that in a union of that kind the consent of both persons was necessary, but from what I have heard, the consent of *both* has not been obtained for the separation, therefore instead of the freedom for each individual which you all claim, you have something that looks to me very like tyranny."

"The tyranny of feeling I grant you, but nothing else. The feelings are often tyrannical, and we cannot force them. For instance, there are people for whom,

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try as we will, we can feel no affection, but we can prevent ourselves from wishing or doing them harm; and if we can only arrive at this state by keeping out of sight of them, then it is our wisest course so to do. And if this is sometimes the case between ordinary acquaintances, can you not imagine how much more crying is the necessity for married people to separate when they have ceased to love each other? For between them there is seldom any middle course, they either love or hate."

"Perhaps you are right; I know very little about the feelings of married people. But, excuse me, do you think there would have been such bitter, passionate feelings evoked if there had been no third person in the case?"

She looked at me intently for a moment as if wondering how much I knew, and then replied hurriedly—

"Those feelings are over and done with. We had only to quote some of Donoghue's own speeches for him to see the absurdity of his position. Love was to be the only tie that should bind them, and if that died, then was each to be as though widowed."

There seemed to be nothing to say to this, and when a few seconds later Mrs. Percival rose to go, I rose also. Holding out her hand to Jessie she said quietly, "Good-bye, I am going home to-morrow."

"No, no, little mother, don't do anything in a hurry. Stay with us a week longer and think matters over quietly."

But Mrs. Percival only shook her head and turned away. Seeing this, I went into my room and hastily put on my hat and coat. As I came out Jessie whispered to me—

"Go all the way with her. She isn't fit to be alone, and try to persuade her to stay another week."

I nodded and then ran after Mrs. Percival, for I saw that she was almost reeling as she walked. Linking my arm in hers I gave her all the support I could. I did not talk, for the simple reason that I had nothing to

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say. The truth was that my own thoughts were in a most terrible tangle. One minute my old orthodox prejudices were rampant and I felt like pouring forth all kinds of bitter denunciations, and the next I was battling with this feeling, for already the spirit of the Colony, the spirit of toleration and charity towards all mankind, was working within me. But alas ! the terrible habit of judging other people's conduct by my own standards had been with me for years, while the desire to be tolerant and charitable was only a matter of days. But silence was also a habit of years, and though I could not keep myself from uncharitable thoughts, I could restrain myself from putting those thoughts into speech.

By the time we arrived at Mrs. Percival's lodgings I could see that she was exhausted. From the presence of the breakfast things on the table, a full cup of tea and an unbroken piece of toast, I gathered that the news had been told to her as she sat down to her breakfast, and she had left it untasted.

Placing her in the one fairly easy chair in the room, I put a few bits of wood on the two or three still live coals in the grate, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing a cheerful fire. I think it was the sight of the homely steaming kettle which roused Mrs. Percival from the state of lethargy which she had fallen into, for standing up and taking down the tea-caddy from the mantel-shelf, she said hospitably, "We must have some tea."

By the time she had drunk a cup of tea and eaten the piece of toast I pressed on her, she was more like herself. The strained look on her face began to lessen, and she even smiled at my rather feeble efforts to be amusing.

Seeing this I began to cast about in my mind for some words with which I could comfort her, for although I had only known her a week I felt unaccountably drawn towards her. I was not given to violent friendships, but from the very first day I had seen her she had in-

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ing life as before ? Besides, if even as you fear this undue worship of freedom is leading them on to unsafe ground, still you must not forget the inspiration they have been to you in the past. We must remember that the people who never disappoint us, on the other hand seldom raise our hopes. People who are sitting down do not fall, neither do they climb mountains. You have to stand up to do that."

How true is the saying that in helping others we help ourselves. When I started I had not in the least known what I was going to say, and yet in trying to soothe my friend's disappointment I had soothed my own, and what was more had straightened out the dreadful tangle of my thoughts, and made life on the Colony once more a possible thing. As for Mrs. Percival, when I had finished she drew a long deep breath, and then straightening herself as though throwing off a burden, she broke into a little short laugh and said—

"Well, I have been in a blue funk, haven't I ? Now I am not going to trouble any more about it I shall just pack up my few traps and then go around and say good-bye to all my friends."

"Then you really mean to go home to-morrow ?"

"Yes, I want to get back to my work. Isn't it Carlyle who says, 'Do the duty which lies nearest thee. Thy second duty will already have become clearer.' When I get back among my own surroundings things will straighten out."

I felt that she was right, and made no effort to detain her. I helped her to pack her things, stayed the night, and walked with her the next morning to the cross-roads, where the carrier called for passengers or parcels. As she wrung my hand at parting she said earnestly, "Remember, whenever you come to London you must come to see me."

"May I ?" I asked delightedly.

"Of course you must. Having crossed each other's paths we must not lose sight of each other again. Who knows, some day we may find another Eden."

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"That's right," I called out. "Do not give up hope."

And then she drove off, and I went back to the Colony.

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off to be stoker, and to hang out the clothes when they were ready.

The next day, not to be beaten, I put on a pair of kid gloves, and succeeded much better, Lizzie Brown assuring me that with practice I should soon learn to rub the clothes and not my hands.

After the clothes were dry and folded, the linen things were put through a primitive process of mangling. This was achieved by rolling them round a long roller, and with a piece of wood on top the whole was worked smartly to and fro across the table. There were not a great many linen things, however, for one of the chief aims of the Colony was to simplify labour, and we all wore flannel or flannelette when possible. Starched things were strictly tabooed.

The third day was given up to mending. Mrs. Percival had come over that day to Jessie Newman's cottage to lend a helping hand, and a very happy day we spent. After that had come the weekly bread-making, and this was also done at the Communal home, for here was a large brick oven which was heated with wood. This was a hot job, and we each took it in turns to stoke. Had the flour been of a good quality, I feel sure our bread making would have been a distinct success. But, alas! with that dark, damp flour which was ground down outright in the colony flour mill, a small machine which some one had presented to them, it was impossible to make good bread. The dough was shiny, and ran all over the oven in flat pancake-shaped loaves.

"What is the matter with it?" I asked, as in trying to knead a loaf it stuck on my hands like glue.

"Well, you see, last summer was very wet, and the corn could not be saved properly, and we had no means of drying it. We are hoping that this year's crop will be better," was Alice Goodwin's placid reply.

I fervently hoped that it would be; I was also guilty of hoping that the present stock of flour would soon run short, then I would go to a miller and pay for some better flour.

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The next day being Saturday, and a sort of odd job day, I suggested to Lizzie Brown after dinner that she and I should take our machines and ride into Southwood and get in a few things which would make the diet a little more palatable. She fell in with my plan readily, more for the fun of riding into Southwood and going into the shops than from any care she had about the food, I believe. Provided with two baskets which we strapped to our handle-bars, we started off on our excursion, my first since I had come to the colony, and the delight of once more spinning over the ground was great.

When we returned in the evening with our baskets full and various parcels hung on our machines, we were pretty well tired, but very satisfied with our afternoon's shopping.

The next day, Sunday, we had as many of the Colonists in to tea as we could make room for, and though they made some appreciative remarks about the good things I had provided, I soon saw that food was of but very secondary importance, the subject under discussion holding the chief place in their thoughts.

Having now been initiated into most of the Colony's indoor industries, I was quite anxious to try my hand at the out-of-door work, for the women took their full share in turns of digging and planting. The only things they did not help in was the digging of trenches, or what was termed deep digging, and the building of cottages; this was left exclusively to the men.

When I arrived at our cottage that morning I found that it was Jessie Newman's day for housework, and on telling her that I proposed doing some digging, she told me I could have her spade and fork. Putting on the oldest and thickest pair of boots I possessed, and a tam o'shanter in place of my hat, I started off with my tools on my shoulder, feeling very workmanlike indeed. In fact as I crossed the field to the piece of land which had been allotted to me, I began to feel rather proud of myself and to wish that some of my friends could see



what a brave figure I was cutting. But when I thought of the look of disgust which would spread over Uncle Seth's face did he know that his niece was trying to earn her living by work which he considered only suited to the intelligence of the working classes whom he so despised, I thought it was perhaps well that he was not likely to see me.

But Mr. Kovalevsky, I was sure of his approval, and I could imagine the smile which would light up his face when he saw how bravely I was shaping; but of the approval of Karl Brietsen I was not so sure. Karl the student, the athlete and revolutionist, was no lover of spade work, nor of any kind of agricultural work whatever. I could imagine how his eyes would twinkle and his mouth twitch as he tried to keep a serious face, for he would think I was only playing at work. This thought sobered me somewhat, and slightly pricked the inflated bubble of my pride, so that instead of stopping to announce my advent to Miss McLeod and Miss Morehen, who were weeding a bed of carrots and carrying on an animated conversation at the same time, as I had fully intended doing, I went quietly to my piece of ground and started to turn it up with considerable energy.

Before I had turned up half a dozen spadefuls my pride began to recover itself, and to an invisible audience I announced that if any one was inclined to call this *play*, then I begged to differ from him. But pride is a poor substitute for knowledge and strength, and, unfortunately for me, I had none of the former and very little of the latter, but I had my share of doggedness, and this helped me to keep on.

"Try the fork, it's much easier when there are weeds."

I looked up to see Lizzie Brown standing at the end of my plot, her face all one broad smile.

"Well, Alice Goodwin called digging a nerve-soother, nerve-irritator would be the truer expression," was my rather breathless reply.

"Oh, everything's hard at first, even talking, but the

world is full of talkers all the same," was her merry answer. "But you haven't got the hang of the job yet. You mustn't take up a spadeful and drop it down the same way, you must turn it over. Here, let me show you."

Catching up the fork she dug it in with her foot, hauled it up, and turned it over with the weed at the bottom. In half the time it had taken me she had dug a row right across my plot. Then straightening herself she asked suddenly, "What are you going to plant here?"

I hesitated for a second or two, for I hadn't thought about planting, my one idea had been to dig. To forestall her laughing at me, however, and to justify myself, I said, somewhat argumentatively, "What does that matter, the ground must be dug up before you can plant anything, mustn't it?"

"Oh, yes, that's all right, but if you want to plant things at once, you'd better pick out all the weeds instead of burying them, for it takes some time for weeds to rot."

I felt rather taken aback, evidently there was more to learn in this job than I had imagined. But I wasn't going to let her see this, so I said carelessly, "Well, we use a lot of onions, suppose I put in some; if I could grow a good crop they would come in useful, wouldn't they?"

"Yes, but you want your ground awfully fine for onions, remember. You'll have to turn it over several times before it will be fit, and then it ought to have a good coat of manure. Besides, come to think of it, it's rather late for onions; suppose you put in some cauliflowers, I've got a few plants and some seeds I can let you have."

I thanked her and said I would follow her advice. The fact was that I had never thought about seed or manure, all I had done in my own mind was to dig up the ground and reap splendid crops, for I had the townsman's vague idea that given the ground and a spade, all the rest followed as a natural consequence. I felt a little cast down as I thought of all I had to learn;

but hope soon sprang up again, and I determined that I would begin to read up the gardening books I had seen in Jessie Newman's cottage that very evening.

During this time Lizzie Brown was turning up the soil vigorously, and with an ease which showed much practice. Looking up at last, she said gravely—

"Talking about seeds, I wonder some of our fellows don't turn their attention to seed growing; they might make a good thing of it. Thoroughly reliable seeds are scarce; of course, you can always get plenty, but you can't be sure they will grow. Now, why shouldn't our Colony become noted for good reliable seeds?"

"A splendid idea I should think. Why don't you suggest it to them?" I asked.

"Oh, I never suggest anything at the councils. You see, I'm not exactly a regular colonist, for I may be off at any time. All the same I think it would be a very good plan to set up seed growing. Once let the Colony be known for supplying thoroughly good seeds, and you would have a regular source of income, and be doing the public a service at the same time."

I began to alter my opinion of this girl; evidently there was a great deal more behind that laughing face than I had given her credit for. Before I could say anything, however, she asked abruptly, "Know anything about theosophy?"

"No; I've tried, but it's altogether too much up in the clouds for me."

"That's how I feel, but then I never had much brain power, so that I don't count for much. Anyway, nearly everybody here seems to be discussing it, and have been for some time. One hears about Karma, Yogis, Mahatmas, occult phenomena, sixth senses, annihilation of space, and thought waves, until 'you don't know where you are.'"

"It's altogether beyond me, and I'm not going to dabble in it," I replied, remembering another and more important study which I had that morning decided to commence.

"You will be wise if you stick to that, but I doubt it. Theosophy's in the air here now, and will have to be discussed until something fresh comes along."

The next minute she burst into a low, chuckling laugh. "I was thinking of my mother," she explained. "Mother is one of the dearest old souls. She is as right as rain as long as she sticks to the old beaten tracks, but once she moves out, she doesn't know which side of her is foremost. All the same she has a sort of fearful joy in considering herself advanced. When I was coming here she didn't know whether to wring her hands and weep over a lost child, or to try to look humble even while she was bursting with pride at having given a martyr to the cause of freedom. It all depended on her audience, you see. To Jessie and Alice I was a lost child, who was putting myself outside the pale of genteel society, but to Aunt Maria, who suggested shutting me up in a room with bread and water until I came to my senses, I was an improved edition of Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Elizabeth of the Roses rolled into one. I nearly broke myself into bits trying to keep from laughing, while mother explained things to Aunt Maria. Mother had been to some of our meetings, and she had got hold of such words as proletariat, altruist, unmoral, parasite, etc. And according to her all the proletariats live in the West End, Park Lane for choice; while the altruists are members of Parliament who all work for nothing. The parasites must be a branch tribe of the Israelites, she said, but as she could not find any mention of them in the Bible, she thought it most probable that they were illegitimate, for nobody seemed to speak of them with any respect."

"Your mother lives here now, doesn't she?"

"Oh, no; she's only up here for a few weeks. She has a small income, and so can live where she likes. I expect Aunt Maria was getting the upper hand, so mother came up here for some fresh arguments. I'm stuffing her with theosophical terms now, and she'll go back a full blown Mahatma. Gracious! I'd give some-

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thing to see Aunt Maria's face. She'll think mother has gone 'stark staring mad,' to use her own expression."

Through the remainder of the morning she stayed with me, working and chatting at intervals, and when dinner time came I looked with pride at the nice fresh brown bed we had made, and in imagination I saw myself cutting great white-hearted cauliflowers. All the way back to the cottage I was planning how many different crops my plot could be made to carry in the course of the summer and autumn. Through the dinner hour I talked gardening with the others, and felt rather pleased with myself when I had managed to work in the gardening term "rotation of crops"; but when I saw Lizzie Brown's shaking shoulders I wished I hadn't, for I guessed she was likening me to her mother.

I had fully intended going back to my plot for the afternoon, but when I rose from dinner all desire for more digging had left me. I could not move without pain, and though the day was still warm, I felt cold and shivery.

"Better rub yourself down with a rough towel and get into some dry things, or you'll get a chill," said Lizzie Brown, as I was walking rather stiffly to my bedroom. "I know how I felt after my first morning's digging, and you'll be stiffer still to-morrow; but another morning's work will wear it off, and after that you won't feel it. It's just like cycling: one must keep in training to do it with ease."

I found this to be very true, and though I felt much more like staying in bed the next morning, I forced myself to get up and do some more digging. At first I could not help groaning at every spadeful of earth I turned up, but as soon as I got warm I felt better, and after a few days I found I could do a couple of hours' digging each day without being over tired. After my cauliflower seeds were sown, I put in some peas and beans, and as I looked at my five neat beds, thanks to Lizzie Brown's instructions, my pride in my own handiwork was boundless. Every day, rain or fine, found

me bending over my beds, and when the first green shoots began to appear, I was more delighted than I can express. I exulted in the thought that I was no longer a parasite living on other people's labour, but a genuine producer. The thought was entrancing, for in imagination I saw myself not only providing for my own needs, but able to give of my abundance to newcomers who might at any time be expected now.

## CHAPTER XIX

### LIFE ON THE COLONY

I HAD found it very easy and very inspiring to propose what I should do with my crops, but alas ! the grubs and the birds seemed to find it just as easy to *dispose* of them for me. If I had had to subsist on my own crops that summer I should have fared but badly. The grubs destroyed all my cauliflowers, and the birds ate all my first row of peas. I secured the other two rows by tying white cotton all over them, and then the dry weather set in, and my peas and beans being late, they grew up tiny and starved looking.

Lizzie Brown tried to comfort me by telling me I had not done so badly seeing how late I had started. That another year I must plant in March, then I should be better prepared for a dry summer. Another year ! And I had so built on supporting myself this year. True, by buying flour and oil and groceries now and again I had provided my share of the housekeeping, but that was not what I wanted. My great desire ever since I had begun to dig had been to be self-supporting. Another thing too, the small sum of money which had been mine from the sale of the household furniture and the few pounds left over from my father's insurance, would not last very much longer, for I had been drawing from it for two years and a half. True, I had used but little while at Uncle Seth's, but still there were always a few expenses. Then there had been my train fares and cabs when I came to Dorset, and since there had been books, stationery, and stamps, and several other

incidental expenses, so that when my first season's crops turned out failures and I had to calculate that for the next six months I could expect but trifling returns from the soil, I began to feel blue.

When I came to the Colony I had still thirty pounds in the bank, and I calculated that even though for the first year I spent five shillings a week on my keep, which was what I understood newcomers generally allowed themselves until they could grow things, by that time I should still have seventeen pounds for any case of emergency. But up to the present I had never succeeded in keeping inside my allowance, for I was not sufficiently Spartan to "do without things." And when soon after I joined the Colony I found out by accident how the others, in order to make up a bed for me, were going short of bedding themselves, I had immediately ridden into Southwood and given an order for a pair of blankets, two pairs of sheets, and some towels. Then again when it came to my turn to cook the meals my temper had given out so hopelessly over the wood fire, that to prevent such another mortifying experience, I had written to the nearest coal dealer and ordered a ton of coals. Hence it will be seen that I had dipped rather heavily into my bank balance.

With the coming winter, too, I should need a few warm things and a pair of stout boots, and one of the tyres of my machine had been patched so many times that before I could ride any more I must get a new one. But spite of all these rather disquieting elements, I had no thought of giving up and going back to "civilization," as Aunt Jane put it in one of her letters. For by this time I had imbibed many of the colonists' ideas, and was as averse as any of them to be a mere parasite again.

This last conclusion I had arrived at independently, for the colonists seemed to take it so much for granted that to be a consumer of all things and a producer of none was such an utterly selfish and indefensible position, that they never troubled to discuss it. It is prob-



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impressed—it is too long drawn out. They much prefer to *pay* for the results, and leave the process to those slow going country folk, whom in the bottom of their hearts they despise for being content with such slow returns.

They were a nondescript lot those visitors. Some of them had come to us with the avowed intention of getting a cheap country holiday, with a good deal of amusement thrown in, and they did not hesitate to show by their looks and by an indirect sort of language how disappointed they were with the accommodation and the food. The amusement was mostly on our side.

There were other visitors, however, who were decided sympathizers, and knowing how bare was the food of the Colony they brought hampers of food stuffs with them, all of which they insisted on sharing with the colonists. The amount of questions asked during the first days of their visits was enormous, and to this I ascribe the taciturnity of one or two of the men which was afterwards complained of. But here was where Miss Morehen shone. She was never tired of answering questions or of expatiating on the beauties of a colony life, and during the summer months she did little save pilot the visitors about the Colony and take them to places of interest in the neighbourhood.

As soon as the days began to shorten and the weather grew colder, the last of our visitors departed, and some of our colonists left us also. Jessie Newman had told me that the autumn and winter was the general weeding out time for the Colony. Winter in the country is always a trying time for people who have been accustomed to the life and bustle of our large towns. And I must confess that had it not been for a private pursuit of my own, the Colony would have been a lonely place that winter. Several of the colonists that I knew most intimately left us. Lizzie Brown went away in the autumn to be married, and Miss McLeod left us about the same time. She had become an avowed theosophist, and went to live near a large town where was a

flourishing theosophical lodge. Billy the Porter also left us, and we heard later that he had married and gone to Canada. Mordaunt took a plot of ground in another county, built himself a house, and according to latest accounts is living a kind of Thoreau life, and like Thoreau seems to extract a great deal of satisfaction out of it. What is still more gratifying to his friends is, that instead of his solitary life narrowing or souring him, he is as genial and cheery as ever, while his judgment is maturing, and of him it may in all reverence be said, "It doth not yet appear what he shall be."

Of Saint Ignatius, who left us to go back into the competitive system, I would prefer to say but little. The name had been bestowed on him in derision, and as such he was worthy of it. Like some of the monks of old, his outward saintliness covered an inward backsliding.

Among those who remained on the Colony nearly all had a literary or mechanical interest, which they could turn to. There is scarcely anything that can be done on the land during the months of November, December, and January, and thus only those who could settle to some indoor pursuit could stand the dulness and inaction of winter. That is why I have come to the conclusion that for a colony to be successful some handicraft should be allied to agriculture.

Among genuine country people a knowledge of rude carpentry, and in many instances of shoe mending, is, I have been given to understand, quite common. During the winter months the small farmers repair all gates, doors, and partitions, replace hinges, fastenings, etc. Boots, leggings, and, where there is a horse, harness is overhauled and mended. All tools are ground, and broken hilts replaced. But the townsman has no such inherited knowledge. Indeed, what room is there in the tiny suburban house for anything that requires elbow room? A carpenter's bench would be almost as embarrassing to find room for as an elephant. And yet for all intending colonists, or those wishful of returning

from him, I feared that he must be dead. But now here he was alive, and evidently in London, perhaps at the address given on the other slip. Yes, that must be it; but why all these precautions I wondered. Karl must have forgotten that our post is safe enough. Nobody would have tampered with his letter had he written it directly to me. Then, as I read the letter again, I took in the other tidings; he had a wife somewhere, and was very ill, and he wanted my help.

"I will go this very day," I said, and without waiting to think further, jumped up from the table at which I had been sitting, and began hastily to gather all my papers together. These, along with my bank book, I placed in a small hand-bag, some impulse making me decide to take them with me. After I had crowded a few other necessary things into the limited space left, I scribbled a few lines to Miss Morehen, who was spending the day in the village, telling her I had been called to London. Then, locking the door, and hanging the key on a nail under the window, of which we all knew, I started off on my three miles' walk to the station.

## CHAPTER XX

### KARL

It was not without many misgivings that I took that journey to London. Long before I had arrived at the station, I saw what a strangely unconventional thing I was doing. For some time after reading Karl's letter I had no thought save that he was ill and alone, and had asked for my help, but now I saw another side to the affair, the prudent and conventional one. I even fancied I could hear what Aunt Jane and Uncle Seth would say if they knew what I was doing, and my cheeks burned at the thought, but still I kept on. Karl had asked for my help, and how else could I give it? How did I know, even if I sent him money (our usual cure for all ills), if that was the help he needed? No, little as I liked defying the conventionalities, I knew that were I to turn back now my conscience would so trouble me and my imagination conjure up such terrible things happening to Karl, that to remain at home would prove harder than to go. And so, as will be seen, it was cowardice rather than courage which kept me on.

No. 51, Didcot Road, Catford, had been the address given me, and as I walked down the Didcot Road at four o'clock that same afternoon looking for No. 51, my heart sank even lower than it had been all day. To think of Karl Brietsen, who so loved open spaces and fresh air, being shut up in one of those brick boxes, with nothing to look out at save other brick boxes exactly like the one he was in!

I can think of nothing more depressing on a dark,

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while the woman was bustling in and out. But as soon as the woman had said, "Your tea is ready now, sir," and had left the room, he turned to me and said in a low excited tone, "Now I will tell you all."

"Not until you have had your tea," I said, seeing how his hands were shaking, and his eyes shining with excitement.

"I cannot eat," he murmured ; "I have no appetite."

I did not wonder at that as I looked at the table, with its uninviting food, dirty crumpled cloth, and things put on anyhow. Still he must need food, and so did I, for I had scarcely eaten anything since breakfast. Seeing that the handful of fire was burning red and clear, I toasted a couple of slices of bread, and after buttering them, cut them into small strips ; then pouring out a cup of tea, said, "Now you must eat a little just to keep me company."

He did his best, but it was little but tea that he took, and I saw that he was only waiting for me to finish to pour out his story to me. As soon as the woman had cleared away, and put on a small lump of coal, he whispered, "Look if she has gone."

I looked, and saw that the passage was empty, then came back, and at his request seated myself near him, so that I could catch his low, rapid tones. It was then I learnt for the first time that he was not only accused of being a revolutionist, but he had been suspected of killing a police spy.

"But you didn't ?" I gasped, shrinking back in horror.

"If I had done that I should not have sent for you, Belinda," was his quiet reply.

And I believed him, for there was truth in his gaze. "Forgive me," I said, "only you used to be so strong. Now tell me what happened."

Then he told me how this spy had been found dead, poisoned, and as it was known that he, Brietsen, had once been a chemist, suspicion had fastened on him. Knowing that as a revolutionist no justice would be

meted out to him, he had fled, and taken up his residence in another town. Here, shortly after, he along with several other revolutionists had been arrested on suspicion of spreading revolutionary literature, and imprisoned without trial. For months he was kept in prison, accused only of being a dangerous revolutionist ; then one day he was heavily chained and taken to another prison. From a warden two days later he learnt that he was now known to be the man suspected of poisoning the police spy. That night, in desperation, he had exerted all his strength to break his chains, but only succeeded in freeing his hands. The chain which was around his waist, and bound him to a ring in the wall, he could do nothing with, and exhausted he threw himself on the bed, yielding to a fit of the blackest despair. While lying there the key was turned in his door, and a woman shrouded in black came into his cell. Closing the door behind her, and uncovering a light, she first whispered to him to be silent, and then taking a key she unlocked the chain which bound him to the ring, and with another unlocked the fetters which bound his ankles ; then seeing the broken chain on his wrists, she laughed softly and whispered, " Ah, no wonder they said you were strong." Then freeing his wrists, she bade him follow her.

Silently and in utter darkness he followed his guide, whither he knew not, but he was not afraid, since no chains bound him. At last, after traversing many corridors, he felt carpets under his feet, and then a door was opened, and they went down a flight of stone steps and through a garden. Here a door in a wall was opened, and not far away was a close carriage, into which he and his companion stepped, and were immediately driven off. They drove fast, but not very far, and as soon as the carriage stopped, and they stepped out, the door of the house in front of which they had stopped was immediately opened, and they entered. Inside were two men, one an old college friend, and then he knew that he was among friends. Here, for the


first time, he saw the face of his companion, and knew her as a trusted revolutionist, though so young. It was she who had recognized Karl in one of the prisoners brought to her uncle's prison, for he was the governor there. This sounded strange to me, but, as Karl explained, revolutionists in Russia are to be found in the most unlikely places, and it is from these unsuspected people that some of their best work has been done. As soon as this girl recognized Karl she passed the word on to other revolutionists, and bade them be at a certain house every night in readiness to receive them.

"She did not know how she should release me, but she had made up her mind to do it."

With these words Karl was silent, and I saw that other and pleasanter thoughts had hold of him for the time being. His eyes had softened, and there was a smile on his face, the first I had seen that evening, making him look more like the Karl I had known at Seadown. A slight noise somewhere brought him back to the present, and with a start the hunted look returned to his eyes.

"Look if any one is outside," he whispered. I looked, but no one was there. Then, with a heavy sigh, he went on to tell me that, after thinking incessantly day and night to no purpose, his deliverer had determined to resort to the doubtful expedient of bribing the jailor. She had sold most of her jewellery, and so had a good sum of money at her command, but that very evening a message had come that this same jailor was ill, and could not attend to his duties. She had taken the message, her uncle at the time being engaged with some friends, he having a card party on hand. A few minutes later she went to the sick jailor with a message purporting to be from her uncle to the effect that she must have the key of the new prisoner's cell, also the keys of his manacles, as a new set were to be put on, he being considered dangerous.

It was through the governor's rooms that Karl had passed, and through his private garden door.



"And where is she now?" I asked, as he again relapsed into silence.

"After she had seen me to the frontier, I was disguised as an old peasant woman, she had intended to return to her uncle, for dere was work waiting dat only she could do, so we parted. Since I have been here I have learnt dat her uncle had denounced her as a conspirator, and getting to know of this, she had decided to go to Switzerland. If I can get away from here I shall join her dere."

"Get away! What is to hinder you?" I asked in surprise.

"Ah, you do not know all yet. When I came to London I had intended to go to Mr. Kovalevsky's, but as soon as I had got my ticket I knew dat I was being shadowed. Some one had got on my track, and was following me. In a little place like Seadown it would have been so easy to have found out who I was, so I decided to stay in London. In de crowd I got away from my man, and came here. I knew Cowen (these are his lodgings) when I lived in London before. He is a Russian Jew, and he professes to be a revolutionist, but it is in theory only. He is too timid to ever do anything. Knowing dat he would never get himself into trouble wid de police, I decide dat he is de safest man to come to. De day after I come I fall ill, and have never been out of de house since. De weather is so awful, always rain or fog, I feel I shall die if I stay here much longer. But I muz not go out now, dough I am a little stronger, for Cowen tinks dis house is watched. Once or twice he tink some one has followed him, and he wants me to go away."

"But why?" I asked. "Surely you are safer here than anywhere. No Russian police can arrest you here."

"Ah, but you forget. I am suspicioned of being a murderer, and a murderer can be arrested anywhere, and taken back to his own country."

"Then where will you go?" I asked, despair laying hold of me as I saw the futility of flight.



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"If I could only get to Switzerland! De people dere do not believe in capital punishment, and I like dat. And I speak Sherman so well, dat I will easily pass for a Swiss. But anyway, de climate is good, and I shall die if I stay here."

I thought so too. "Oh, if you only could get to Switzerland," I breathed. "But who is there we can get to help you?"

"Dat is what I say every day as I sit here and tink. Who can I get to help me? Not a Russian, for dat would only increase suspicion if he were to come here. And den I tink of you. One woman helped me out of Russia, and anoder may help me out of England. So I write to you to come to me."

"But what can I do?" I gasped.

"If you loved a man, and he was in danger of his life, would you not try to do someting? Would you not tink day and night till you find a plan? Belinda, you are de only one who can help me now, for I cannot help myself; all my strength is gone."

There was an agony of pleading in his voice, and as I listened to him and looked at his shrunken frame, for he had stood up in his excitement, at the deathly white face on which the beads of perspiration were standing so thickly, my heart was torn with anguish. And to think that I, Belinda the Backward, was the only friend he could turn to for help! It seemed so terrible, so pitiful, as though an eagle were to ask help from a robin. And then some new force seemed to enter into me. Something that braced my nerves, and made me vow that I would help him, though it cost me every ounce of strength I had in my body. The next minute I heard myself saying—

"Sleep soundly to-night, Karl, for I promise you that I will not sleep until I have discovered some plan by which you can get to Switzerland."

His face lit up as he whispered, "Now you look like my Guila. It will be all right." Then he raised my hand to his lips and kissed it almost reverently.

Interviewing Karl's landlady a little later, I learnt that a bedroom could be put at my disposal for as many nights as I liked, and though I would much have preferred a cleaner lodging, I thought it better to remain where I was, so that I could be near to help Karl if anything unforeseen happened.

As I lay down in my clothes on the outside of the bed, for I had not the courage to place myself between those dirty sheets, I racked my brain for some plan by which Karl could be got out of England. He was ill and weak, but I believed that hope, some fresh air, and a change of scene would soon pull him round again. I needed no doctor to tell me that it was terror and confinement rather than actual disease which was wasting him to a skeleton. If I could only get him away from this damp, musty-smelling place, and get some fresh, dry air into his lungs, he would begin to mend. "Foreigners never can stand our fogs," I said to myself tritely.

The next minute I was sitting up in bed staring into darkness.

## CHAPTER XXI

### FLIGHT

THE word fog had given me an idea. The damp, close fog which Karl hated so much, and which was doing him so much harm, should be turned into a friend, for what spy, be he ever so clever, can trace a man in a London special !

"The first day there is a regular thick fog, Karl shall escape," I whispered, as I lay down again. "He got out of Russia disguised as a woman, but he shall leave England disguised only as a man."

And then I almost laughed as I thought out the details of that disguise, for it was funny to think of Karl, who was an avowed Atheist, escaping in the dress of an orthodox clergyman, for that was the character I had decided that he should assume.

Two days later, in one of the thickest fogs I have ever seen, Karl and I left Didcot Road without any one seeing us depart. Mrs. Bucknell, our landlady, had gone out to bring home some washing, thus giving us the opportunity we had been hoping for. Beating up an egg in a glass of wine, which Karl obediently swallowed, we quickly made ready. That morning before going to business Cowen had shaved Karl, and now with his clean-shaven emaciated face, white wig and spectacles, flat hat and big inverness cloak, a respirator over his mouth, and white muffler pulled up around his neck and chin, he looked as unlike the bearded revolutionist the police would be searching for as a man could well look. Even on the brightest day I doubt

if his nearest friends would have known him, but in this fog I felt that we were quite safe.

I had decided that he must not talk save in a whisper, and the respirator would allay all suspicion on that score. I left an open note on the table for Cowen, telling him that the specialist Mr. Hartmann had consulted had given him an appointment for that morning, and I was taking him. But that if the doctor thought it necessary I might take him to a hospital, and in that case would he pay Mrs. Bucknell at the end of the week?

It was not far from Didcot Road to Catford Station, but it taxed all poor Karl's strength to do it. But when we were seated in an empty carriage, for to sustain the character I had taken first-class tickets, the relief of being away from that dismal back sitting-room, and the motion of the train, did him good, and whenever he heard the fog signal I saw a smile brighten his face, for I had told him that this fog would prove his greatest safety. But as we crawled along stopping at all sorts of unlikely places, I began to wonder if the fog would not overdo its friendliness, and lose us our train at Holborn. I had given ourselves an hour's margin, but it looked as if we might exceed it. I said nothing, however, to Karl, for he needed all his strength, and hope was his best strengthener.

Holborn at last, and when we got across to the other platform the Dover train was still waiting. How thankfully I settled Karl in a corner with a rug across his knees and a copy of *Punch* in his hands. I had hesitated between getting him a copy of the *Times* or a *Standard*, but I weakened as I thought of poor Karl trying to appear interested in such weighty matter. Besides, I had once or twice seen clergymen reading *Punch*, so I thought I would temper judgment with mercy.

Our tickets had been clipped, and we seemed just on the eve of starting when I saw two men walking the length of the train peering into every carriage. There

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was something suspicious to me in the close scrutiny, and as they came nearer and nearer to our carriage my heart was thumping so loudly that I wondered Karl did not hear it. I looked at him—he was looking at one of the cartoons, and for a minute or two was, I believe, quite oblivious to his surroundings. If he would only remain like that I felt sure that no one would suspect him of being anything but what he appeared—a delicate old clergyman going 'away to escape the London fogs. At last they had arrived at our door and looked in, and then moved on to the next carriage. I had steeled myself to glance up at them casually, and then returned to my paper. When I knew they had gone I stole a look at Karl; he seemed quite unconscious that anyone had been there, and I resolved not to tell him.

Two minutes later the guard whistled, doors were banged, and we were off. I thought I caught a glimpse of the two men just under a gas lamp, and then the fog swallowed them up and I saw them no more. Would there be anyone waiting at St. Paul's, I wondered, but we passed through that station without any further excitement.

For the first time in my life I felt what a terrible thing it was to be under the ban of the law. And I knew also for the first time what a glorious thing is freedom. No wonder men like Karl had fought all their lives for it. And why should it be denied them? Surely freedom should be the heritage of all God's children? Then I began to wonder if the time would ever come when men would not sit in judgment one upon another, saying rather to each other, "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone."

For a little time as these speculative thoughts held me, I had forgotten the weight of anxiety with which I was burdened, and when I looked across at Karl I saw that he was fast asleep. The motion of the train and the fog blotting out all our surroundings had no doubt lulled him into security, and with his head resting

against the window he slept like a baby. I was glad, for I knew how little sleep he had before I came, for he had told me that ever since Cowen had thought he was followed home he had not taken off his clothes, holding himself in readiness to escape through the backyard should he hear any strange voices in the house. That was why he always got up and drew the curtains over the window himself before the gas was lit, for fear that anybody might be peering into the room.

Poor Karl, it was not much to be wondered at that even his strong constitution had broken down under such a strain. And now he slept, but only to wake up with a look of terror as the train stopped at Herne Hill. I was glad that no one was in the carriage, for his look of terror might have roused suspicion. Leaning across I whispered hastily—

“Try to smooth your face and look at your paper; we are stopping at a station now.”

With an effort he pulled himself together and began once more to turn over his paper. The next minute a fussy, talkative old lady bustled in. She had not been seated long before she told me that her daughter was a lady's maid at Dover, and was now lying ill, and she was going to nurse her. She tried to enter into conversation with Karl, but I forestalled any speech on his part by telling her he had lost his voice in the fog and could only speak in a whisper, and he had been advised to speak as little as possible. She flooded me with remedies, all of which I promised to make a note of. She was very trying, but it is possible that her chatter helped to while away the time.

At Dover the boat was waiting, and we got on board without much delay. The weather was fairly bright and clear here, and Karl drew in the air and longed, I know, to cast away the respirator. But it being a part of his disguise I thought it safer for him to wear it.

We arrived at Calais shortly after three o'clock. Here it had been arranged that I was to take Karl to

the house of a German Professor and there leave him. Years before this man had been the German teacher in the university where Karl was a student, and though he had never allowed himself to be drawn into any political agitations, yet Karl had known that secretly he was in sympathy with the students. To him then we were to go, and after that I was to return to London, if possible, that night. Left to himself Karl would provide himself with a new disguise, for as he told me, with something of the old-time twinkle in his eyes, his French was much too good for an Englishman.

At Calais I managed with Karl's whispered instructions to get a fiacre to take us to the Professor's. Happily we found that he was at home, and after some trouble and many whispers from Karl I managed to make the French girl understand what we wanted, and we secured an interview. As soon as the door was closed and we could hear the tapping of the servant's slippers as she walked across the uncarpeted hall, Karl took the astonished old Professor by the hand, and poured out his explanations in German. At first he looked bewildered, and then I saw him shake his head and frown gloomily. But later his expression changed, and I knew that Karl had enlisted his sympathy and had convinced him of his innocence of the crime of which he was accused, even as he had convinced me, and that being the case I felt that help must be sure to follow. I could not understand a word that was said, and my anxiety was no doubt written on my face, for a little later the old man looked at me with, I thought, a kindly light in his eyes. Some time after, when Karl had evidently told him something about me, he held out his hand and said in excellent English, "Mademoiselle, you have acted with much bravery and very great kindness to our unfortunate young friend here. He may be unfortunate in his country, but he has been most fortunate in his friends. Whether any man can do as much for him as you two women have done is to me very doubtful, but he shall have my best help."

A few minutes later while the Professor was giving some orders at the door, Karl whispered to me, "It is all right ; I am as safe wid him as wid you or Guila. He is something like you, he does a lot more dan he promises."

As I could no longer be of any service to Karl and my presence might prove embarrassing to the Professor, who was a bachelor, I decided to leave Calais as soon as possible. After an anxious study of the time-table I found that if I took the train to Boulogne and caught the 7.10 boat to Folkestone, I could get back to Charing Cross at 10.45 that night. This I decided I would rather do than wait at Calais for the night boat. On learning that I could speak no French the Professor very kindly offered to see me to the station and put me in care of the guard.

This he did, and at seven o'clock that evening I was once more on board with my face towards England. I had seen but little of Calais or Boulogne, for Karl and his future occupied all my thoughts. His passionate words of praise for the service I had rendered him were still ringing in my ears, as the boat began to move, and I turned to take a last look at the shores of the country which now sheltered him. To think of Karl throwing off one disguise only to assume another, escaping from one country only to flee to another, never safe anywhere, was to me a thought so pathetic that I could have sobbed aloud. Would the time ever come when Russia would be just to her sons, when even a revolutionist might safely allow himself to be tried for a crime of which he was innocent, knowing that he could rely on a fair trial and an unbiassed judgment ?

Then later as I remembered the Professor's warm grip of the hand which was to me such an earnest of the help he would give to Karl, my sore heart was soothed and some of the strain and anxiety which I had borne for days was lightened. I had done all I could do now, and Karl was in other hands than mine. I could not but feel relieved at the thought, for freed



## CHAPTER XXII

### AN OUTSIDE FORCE

As I listened to Mrs. Percival and breathed in the atmosphere of her peaceful home, I could scarcely realize that only yesterday I had been travelling across England and a part of France with a man fleeing from so-called justice. I wondered what Mrs. Percival would say did she know, but she had seemed to take for granted that I had come to visit my friends, as was the custom of the colonists in winter, and I had not undeceived her. In fact I had decided to tell no one, for the fewer people mixed up in the matter the better.

The next minute I was startled out of the reverie I had fallen into by hearing Mrs. Percival say, "Well, and what are your plans for the future?"

Plans! There was nothing further I could do for Karl now. I could only wait and hope soon to hear the good news that he had rejoined the girl, who in my estimation was such a fitting mate for a revolutionist, for had she not sacrificed everything for him and for the cause?

Then rousing myself I said with a half-smile in answer to Mrs. Percival's question—

"Stay here until to-morrow if you will keep me, and then return to the Colony."

"Of course I will keep you, but don't be so sure about returning to the Colony; there may be other work for you than that," was the reply.

"Why! have you found a new Eden?" I asked lightly.

She shook her head. "I am not sure that I am searching for it now. It may be that I, like Moses, shall be denied the Promised Land. I have thought lately that it is perhaps my work to keep alive in the minds of the town dwellers the fact that they are in bonds, simply because they do not insist on their share of the heritage of the earth. God never intended the land to be a monopoly of the rich, but to be the heritage of all His children. Let us only get the people to understand this, and they will not rest until they get back their own. But it is not of my work that I want to talk, but of yours."

I saw that she had something to unfold so waited for her to continue. She looked at me for a second or two in silence, and then said, "I am wondering how much you are willing to sacrifice for your principles, Belinda."

"I am not sure that I have any," was my rather flippant reply.

She looked rather perturbed, I thought, and then taking a letter from the mantelpiece, and folding it at the second page said, "Will you read this and give me your opinion?"

It was written in a woman's hand, very neat and strong, and ran as follows—

"I have been thinking over what you said to me yesterday, and I agree with you that the time has come when it is to the women that we must look to put an end to this insane desire for wealth which is sapping all true progress, killing all idealism, and converting our men into mere money-making machines. If it were not for the women I believe that men would soon see how senseless the present state of affairs is, but as long as they have women dependent on them and on whom they can lavish their wealth, so long will they have not only an excuse for this gambling craze, for that is what a great deal of our business amounts to, but they will have a justification with which to salve

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their own conscience. I say this deliberately, for I honestly believe that the majority of our business men could not do as they do without this justification. If women would show their male relatives that they valued a pure conscience and clean business hands more than wealth or display, do you think that men would do the shady things they are constantly doing? No, once take away the justification and the present rotten state of affairs would soon cease. But how to do it? How to awaken woman's conscience, how to show her that she is at the root of this evil, that it is *she* who is setting the pace in this race for gold?

"I have an idea of a plan which might do something if it were tried, but I cannot undertake it by myself. The most I can do is to find the money. My scheme is this. To hunt up from all sources, articles or paragraphs that have been strongly and seriously written by eminent men and women, on woman's vanity and love of display, and its evil consequences (I have a friend who can help me very materially in the collecting of the matter) and then to have these extracts printed in monthly sheets, under the heading, say, of 'Our Women's Simplicity Crusade.' We will send copies to every well known woman interested in philanthropic or reform movements, and to every clergyman and minister's wife throughout the country. We must ask them not only to distribute copies for us, but to show their sympathy by setting an example of simplicity both in their dress and their homes.

"Now this is a big job, I know, and it will necessitate the wading through of a tremendous amount of matter. Can you find me the woman to do it? She must believe in simplicity herself, otherwise she will have no enthusiasm for the work. The job may take a couple of years to do thoroughly, and during that time she must live in my house, and give herself entirely to the work. Do you know of such a woman? She must be willing to work hard and to fare as simply as I do, and in return I promise to pay her a living wage for two years. Your

share in our crusade shall be to find me the right woman and send her on as soon as you like."

"Well," said Mrs. Percival, as I returned her the closely written sheets.

"Well!" I echoed. "Who are you going to send?"

"You."

"Me!" I gasped.

"Yes, you. You are the only woman I know free of ties and able to undertake the work. Will you do it?"

"But the Colony," I murmured feebly. "I had almost decided to throw in my lot with them permanently."

"That can wait. Here is a definite work which must be done now. Miss Hunter has the money for this scheme at present; later, she may not have it, for she has always large demands on her purse. Now, what do you say?"

I said nothing, for the simple reason that I did not know what to say. I think I should have laughed if Mrs. Percival had not appeared so dreadfully in earnest, for to me it seemed so comical that anyone should consider me, Belinda the Backward, able to undertake *any* reform work, much less this which seemed to me to be so difficult as to be almost hopeless. Whatever could Mrs. Percival be thinking of? And yet she had said that I was the only woman she knew of free of ties and able to undertake the work.

"You are the only one who can help me now, Belinda," I seemed to hear Karl's voice say again. I had responded to that appeal, should I refuse to respond to this? "Ah, but that was different," I caught myself replying. "That was an appeal to the heart rather than to the head, and women are always more moved by such appeals. Then, again, that was a matter of life and death. That was a concrete case and this an abstract one, and whoever heard of a woman getting enthusiastic over abstract cases?"

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Mrs. Percival was still looking at me and waiting for a reply, so to gain time I decided to argue the point; so I began:

"In the first place, I am not sure that Miss Hunter's conclusions are altogether right, for I believe there are many men who go on heaping up money for the mere love and excitement of making it. Then again, many of them are just as pleased at being seen by the side of an elegantly dressed woman as the woman is herself. No, I don't think I could muster up any very great sympathy for the men."

"Yes, but if we could convert the women to simplicity we should take away the men's justification, and that would be a step forward. But go on, what are your other objections?"

"Well, then, as to the work itself. I think a man would do it much better than a woman, for this reason. Women when they throw themselves into any reform work are inclined to take it too seriously, and then they begin to shriek, and to make themselves ridiculous. Now, the whole affair would appear so comical to a man (for, say what you like, men never will acknowledge that they are led by women), that he would enter into the affair with zest. He would stand outside his job, so to speak. His critical faculties would be perfectly unbiassed, and thus he would be able to decide on the right kind of matter. I can even imagine him getting thoroughly interested in his work and writing a slashing piece of editorial satire with each sheet. Why, come to think of it, he might even achieve Miss Hunter's purpose on those lines, for there is nothing that will penetrate a woman's vanity like satire or being made to appear ridiculous."

"I don't agree with you a bit," burst out Mrs. Percival hotly. "And I must say I am very disappointed in you. I thought you thoroughly believed in simplicity both as to dress and the home. Then, again, I don't believe that women are so wedded to vanity as you seem to think."

"Then why this crusade?"

"Simply because women are thoughtless, and have never really realized that it is their vanity and love of luxury and display which has helped to kill idealism and make us the commercial race that we are. Women do not know what the business world in which men have to compete with each other is like. Many of them are like children who think they have only to coax for a thing long enough to get it. But I do not believe that the majority of them are so utterly selfish and heartless as their conduct would indicate. If I did I think I should become a shrieking sister myself and denounce the whole lot of idle luxurious women."

"Perhaps you are right," I said with a sigh, for somehow I did not want to be made to feel in earnest over this affair. After my experiences of the last four days, the Colony seemed a haven of rest to me, and knowing how much I was always at the mercy of people with stronger wills and personality than myself, I wanted, if possible, to keep out the personal note. I dreaded having any more appeals made to me, and I did not want to be convinced. I was tired both in body and mind, and desired nothing better than to go back to the quiet, restful, contemplative life on the Colony. Just then there was a ring at the front door and Mrs. Percival left me.

When I opened my eyes some time later it was to see that the room had grown quite dark. I must have been asleep for over an hour. The fire had burnt very low, and as I started to mend it Mrs. Percival came in.

"Ah, you are awake at last," she said as she lit the gas. "I peeped in once or twice, but you looked so pale and tired that I thought I would let you rest. Tea is nearly ready, but perhaps you would like a wash first, then after tea you may feel equal to a little discussion."

She nodded in answer to my look of inquiry, and said with a little laugh—

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"I saw I was going to have some trouble with you, so I sent a wire to Miss Hunter. She is much better able to express herself than I am."

"I ought to have gone back to the Colony this morning," I said with a groan that was more real than assumed. "This is no place for a non-resister."

She laughed again as I went upstairs, and the next minute I heard her singing—

"Then forth to life, O child of earth,  
Be worthy of thy heavenly birth;  
For noble service thou art here,  
Thy *sisters* help, thy God revere!"

Miss Hunter came that evening—a short, stout, sensible-looking woman, very simply dressed. When Mrs. Percival introduced me to her she gave me a long, searching look, and then said with the suspicion of a twinkle in her eyes: "Are you prepared to lead our forlorn hope, Miss Tremayne?"

"Then you recognize that it is a forlorn hope?" I replied quickly.

"Quite, but it is a work that wants doing all the same. *We* may never see any results from our labours, but there will be results all the same. I remember as a little girl being very much interested in a tract on the cover of which was the picture of a barefoot peasant woman standing in a stream of water. In her hands she held a sieve in which was some wool which she was washing. On the bank was standing a clergyman, and she was thanking him for his last sermon and telling him much good it had done her. Gratified, the clergyman asked what were the parts most appreciated. She could not tell him. Was it this point or that? She could not remember. A trifle disappointed, he asked her if she could remember the text. No. Then rebukingly he asked her how it could have done her any good since she could not even remember the text. Plunging the sieve with the wool under the stream and then holding it until it had leaked dry, she replied, 'Father, you see the sieve holds no drop of water, and yet the wool

gets clean.' Now I think this is all we can expect to do. Pour knowledge over women's minds in the hope that we may wash away some of the vanity which soils them, even as the wool was soiled by dirt."

She said no more just then, but before she left that night, I had promised to give the next two years of my life to the work she contemplated, stipulating only that I should have a month to devote to my own affairs, for I wanted to finish these papers while the events I had been living through for the past two years were fresh in my memory.

\* \* \* \* \*

The month will be up to-morrow, and this is my last night at the Colony. Miss Morehen and Jessie Newman have gone to bed, and I am alone in my little bed-sitting-room. As I look around I wonder who will be the next occupant and what she will be like, and also what name they will give her. I even feel a little pang of jealousy at the thought of this unknown successor who will use this room and work my plot of ground. At any rate she is bound to be a woman of stronger will and more settled convictions, I tell myself with a sigh. And yet to-day Jessie Newman congratulated me on the work that I had undertaken, and assured me that she would have to think out a new name for me, for the old one was no longer appropriate. But I am not so sure of that, for it seems to me that I have never really decided anything for myself in my life. If I have come forward and been found in positions, which, to say the least of, one would have expected to be occupied only by people with strong convictions, or at least some amount of enthusiasm, it has been because circumstances have been too strong for me, and my mind responds too readily to the latest convincing argument. Left to myself, I feel assured that I still deserve the name of "Belinda the Backward."

THE END.



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